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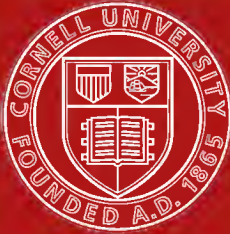
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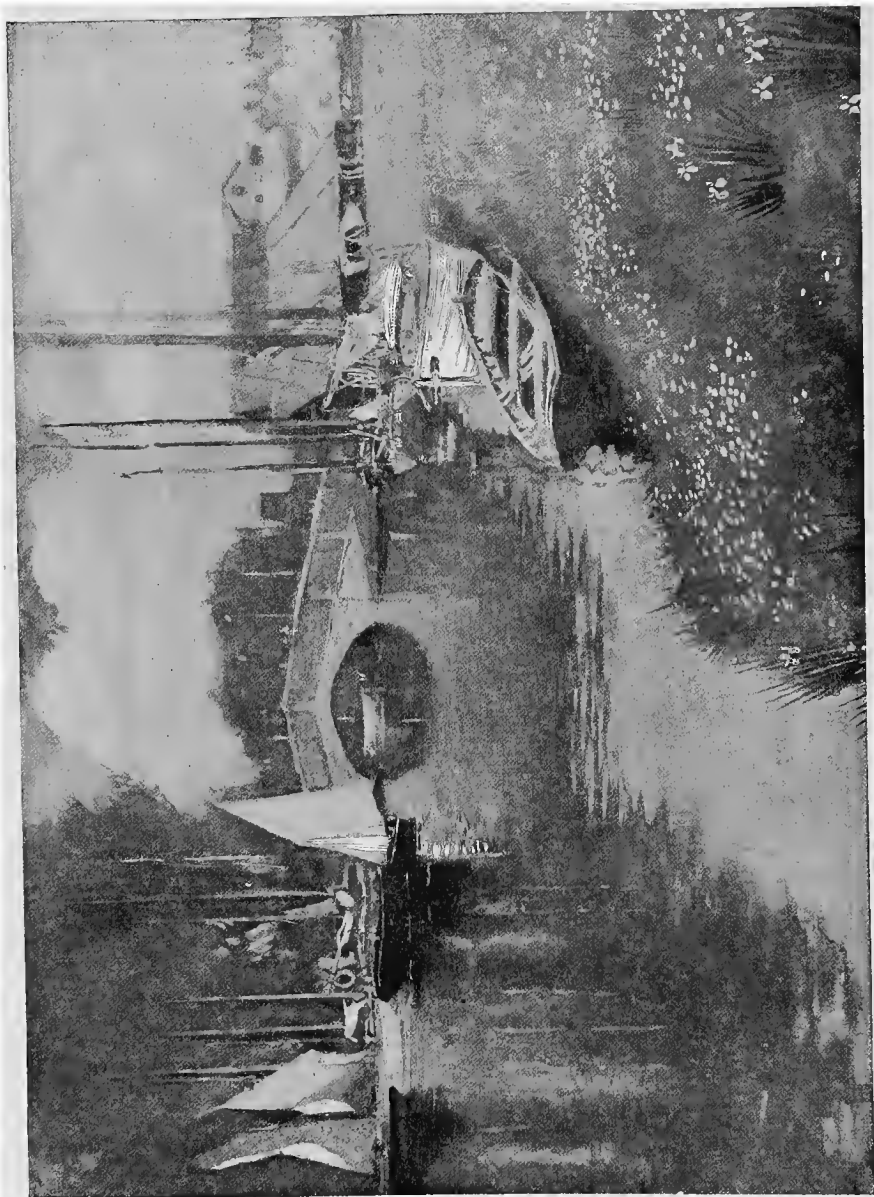
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ON THE BROADS





YACHTING-STATION, WROXHAM

ON THE BROADS

BY

ANNA BOWMAN DODD

AUTHOR OF

'CATHEDRAL DAYS,' 'THREE NORMANDY INNS,' 'GLORINDA,' ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY JOSEPH PENNELL

London

MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD.

NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN CO.

1896
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PROLOGUE

UNDER the awning that roofed the high porch, with its sides gaping open to catch the faintest stir of the night wind, it was hot that July evening at Mrs Gower-Granger's. Grouped beneath the palms and the striped tent-cloth, the ladies were making but a feeble pretence at talk. They eyed each other dully over ceaselessly moving fans. Besides the heat, there was the end-of-the-season lassitude weighing heavily upon the wearied guests. So the ladies sat and fanned themselves, and said little or nothing. It was effort enough to carry their languid glances beyond the palms, into the thick dusk of the hot London night.

To this contagion of apathy there was one brilliant little corner of exception. From an inner drawing-room there came repeated bursts of laughter, a girlish voice, talking swiftly and continuously, leading the gay chorus. Seated quite fearlessly,

with the courage of the young, beneath a yellow disk of light made by the tall lamp at her elbow, Violet Belmore seemed to be communicating to her surroundings that breeze and freshness for which every one had been panting all day. At her end of the table, during the long dinner-hour, conversation had not flagged ; the mental air had been kept in a state of exhilarating flutter. She was doing as much now for those circling about her chair, bits of her sprightly talk floating out to us, seated in full weight of dulness under the motionless palms.

“ A whole fortnight on the deck of a yacht, you know. . . . Such a jolly break in the season. . . . Fresh? You think I am looking fresh? How kind of you. You see—it’s only a country colour I’ve brought up to London.” Then some one near her spoke in a droning key, and Miss Belmore’s voice was lost. When the inevitable pause came, once again the strong, sweet voice rang out. The charming vision in pink, with the glowing cheeks and the dancing, talkative eyes, was still holding her little court, and she could be heard now the more distinctly, as she was swinging along in full tide of speech. “ Lonely? On the Broads? Oh, one can’t be lonely, with all the other yachts and wherries about. It’s too delightful,—so wild, you

know, with the sea-gulls and swans ; and so pretty, with all those white and brown sails moving in and out among the trees. It's so amusing too ! Fancy, at night you are all moored to the same barn ! It's quite the thing to anchor in a meadow ; and then you walk about, and make friends with the other yachts. There's nothing prosaic about the Broads ! You pay each other visits as you do at Henley ; the guitars make friends with the violins, and the high sopranos with the Cambridge basses. One hears delightful music at times. Did I take my violin with me ? Indeed, yes. I always make a point of playing to the stars ; they make such a respectful audience, don't they ?—too far away to wince at a false note or——”

“What is this about violins and the stars, Miss Belmore ? ” interpolated a male voice. And with the gentlemen's advent, the ladies' group was soon dispersed.

Long after Mrs. Granger's little dinner had been relegated to the oblivion of other dull dinners, the praises of that nebulous region of the Broads, by the beauty of the evening, continued to haunt the imagination. Swans and sea-gulls ; yachts sailing among the meadows ; tinkling guitars making treble accompaniments to the bass of student voices ; the

disturbing flutter of white-winged sails ; and the still more disquieting sense of there being a chance, somewhere in this tight, snug little island, of meeting Adventure, cap in hand, ready to make friends with one, to go forth for a day or a week into the wide fields of the unknown,—these were the little children of fancy running riot in one's mind, making London, as a playhouse, seem at once dirty and dull.

The Broads, as we soon learned, was, indeed, a region rich in those sudden surprises and sharp contrasts which invest a country with the immutable charm of romance. There, in narrow rivers, rode stout-timbered barges and wherries ; the sails between the tree-aisles seemed to be walking upon the meadows ; the rose-gardens grew suddenly into rabbit-warrens ; and there the curl of the sea swept the feet of sand-dunes, on the other side of which flowed the placid inland rivers. The scene was perfectly set, with a sylvan landscape for a frame. From historic seat to reedy waste ; from the rounded towers of the flint-built parish churches to the crumbling mortar of a St. Benet's Abbey ; from the quiet of the river-ripple to the more turbulent waters of the Broads themselves, past each succeeding picture one floated, to come to

anchor at last, perchance, at the crowded Yarmouth or Norwich quays.

The Broads district lies between the sea-beaches of Yarmouth and Lowestoft, the grain-fields of Wroxham, and the crowded river-wharves of Norwich. Here are the plains and valleys through which flow the Bure, the Yare, and the Waveney. Before losing themselves irrevocably in the sea, these rivers turn aside, as it were, now and then, from their more serious duty of providing a watery highway, to frolic in a series of wild lakes and meres. These limpid waterways have been used for generations by the homely Norfolk barges; for generations also it has been an open secret to sportsmen and anglers that in summer the Broads are an angler's paradise, and that in winter the wild duck are almost as numerous as thrushes in August. In time the secret was whispered abroad. Following in the footsteps of the men of the rod came others with palette hooked on thumb; and once the smoke from an anchored house-boat—the artist's improvised studio or the journalist's den—rose up among the reeds and grasses to rival the vaporous column circling skyward from the fenman's cottage, and the land of the Broads was summarily annexed to the domain of pure romance. This its magnet still holds good;

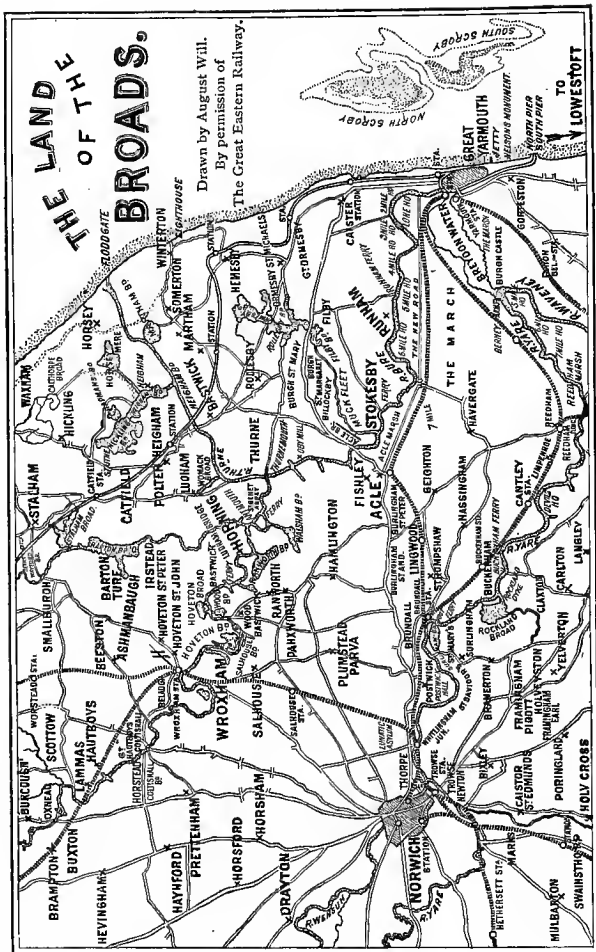
and now, as one may see during the whole of the long summer, the sails between the meadows are almost as thick as cabs in Piccadilly.

For more than a decade, cruising on the Broad's has taken a foremost place in the long list of summer sports and pastimes yielded by that amazing little island, where, by utilising every rill and rivulet, every hill and upland, man has doubled the size and tripled the pleasure-giving capacity of the stretch of earth he calls his England.

Would you hoist sail from the heart of a rustic village? There is Wroxham, upon the river Bure, seven miles from Norwich—an admirable collection of thatched cottages, tall hedges, rose-gardens, rustics, and clucking hens. This yachting station in a meadow is one of the favourite points of departure for a cruise on the Broad's. But if you are one of those who must have the scent of the sea in your nostrils, Great Yarmouth, down upon the coast, will send you forth as well equipped for an inland voyage into poppy-land as for rounding the Cape. Lowestoft, farther south, will rival that perfection, with the added attraction to fishermen of offering a swift approach to Oulton Broad and its fresh-water caches.

We were in pursuit, not of fish, but of adventure,

and therefore it was that Wroxham had cast its spell upon us. We were curious to see how an inland village, of strictly agricultural habits and rural traditions, would arrange the *mise-en-scène* of a yachting station. As we slipped along between the meadow-banks, one brilliant July morning, the push of the railway train towards Norwich was like the swift closing of a door on a noisy, bustling stage-coach. The heavy tread of the Piccadilly strollers, and the thin music of Hungarian zithers at monotonous At Homes, were to be replaced by other sounds—by the song of summer rivers and the trill of the lark in the meadow.



CHAPTER I

WROXHAM BRIDGE

IT was high noon, and the sun was hot on the river Bure. Close to its banks we were seated, on some overturned barrels, looking out upon this river, blinking our eyes. It was not the heat, nor even the sun-rays, dazzling as was their sparkle on the glittering river surface, that gave us this blinking of the eye. It was sheer amazement. At any moment, we were certain, if we closed our dazed lids, we should open them on something less unreal, more commonplace than the spectacle presented along this river-bank. The absurdly incongruous features would presently roll themselves up and disappear, and the stage, we should find, would be properly set as a genuine rustic village-scene.

Wroxham itself, from the very outset, had dealt fairly with us. She was a true rustic. She was as beautiful as a dream : it was the river that

was playing upon us its trick of surprise. Up yonder, sylvan Wroxham had met us at the station ; her grain-fields ran up to the railroad tracks to greet us. The highroad exposed its flinty, sun-flooded surface, only to disappear between the green aisles of hedgerows. Thatched roofs rose above these hedges, and gardens and vines bloomed about and beyond them. Between the hedges, clipped and trimmed as is the head of a Frenchman, we had met the company one expects to see peopling English highways,—farmers, rattling along in their high carts ; boys whistling ; children in pinafores, crying at nothing ; and the slow-moving procession of field-labourers, farm-horses, and high-heaped hay-carts. Such had been the rustic shapes and the pastoral life we had passed on our way to Wroxham Bridge.

It was at the bridge that the scene had changed, as in the twinkling of an eye. It became theatrically unreal ; for the river Bure was playing a double part, —that of a sylvan stream and a nautical highway. Masts, thick and near, rose above the meadow-patches ; moored to the bushy banks was a fleet of boats ; sails, little and big, brown, white, patched, and stained, were aflutter in the light noon-breeze. On the shores and the yachts' decks live sailors, in real jerseys

and racing caps, were reefing sails and coiling ropes. Rustic porters were carrying supplies aboard with a great and beautiful seriousness,—for this cruise among the grasses was obviously undertaken with all the gravity of a genuine sea-voyage. Would any marine mind, in full possession of its nautical faculties, have looked to find a yachting station in such a setting? In this narrow river, where there seemed barely room for a genuine wave, lay this fleet at anchor in the fields. The scent from the rose-gardens mingled with the sea-smells still clinging to the furled sails. To the throbbing song from yonder full-throated blackbird, atilt on a reed-stalk, was added the sailors' refrain, "Oh, ho! Ho hoy!" Across the river, sails were unfurled from where they had lain serenely upon a bed of rushes. Pennants were run up along tree-trunks that turned out to be mastheads. Dingies and row-boats were spinning madly about between squads of ducks and ducklings, whose protesting "Quack!" was the one right and natural note that rose up from an audacious little river, boasting an animation commonly associated solely with the sea.

This yachting scene on the river Bure was lively. Although it was England, it was gay enough to have been Italy, say, or even France. A cruise

on the Broads was evidently performed in the true spirit of adventure. No one was going forth to their holiday with the air of its being a sad duty. These cruising parties were friendly. The formality of having been brought up together was disregarded, as if by common consent. People spoke quite naturally; occasionally there was even an interchange of humour, and those who had never met before laughed and were gay together—were, in a word, entirely human, having agreed to forget, for the moment, apparently, that they were English. It was quite a family party.

“Would you mind pitching me that silhouette?” came from one poop-deck to a stout gentleman on shore.

“Not in the least. Shall I throw you the vegetable baskets as well?”

“Oh, if you would!” cried in an ecstasy an exceedingly attractive example of one of the girls in boating suits and diminutive sailor-hats, various replicas of whom one saw popping out of deck-cabins and fidgeting from the shore to the boats, with the agitation common to the young, when they are also girls and pretty. The ladies were not the only ones who had come down to this river-bank to show themselves. Young men in faultless flannels,

gaudy of sash and necktie, some of whom struck a theatrical pose against the rigging of their boats, were tunefully shouting orders, as serenely conscious as if obligingly rehearsing an operatic rôle. Others among these cruising parties were in dead earnest ; these had "Off for a holiday" written in the creases of their anxious brows. Some of the clergymen present and several middle-aged ladies gave the most poignant signs of their pleasure going hard with them. What is there about middle age that develops the flibbertigibbet in priests and women? One fussy curate, carrying a bandbox, several heads of fresh lettuce, and a long fishing-rod, was signalling in distress to his party on the opposite bank, his young daughter, meanwhile, showing her parent the path to wisdom, by merely crossing the bridge, a stone's throw from their boat's mooring. At that, several elderly gentlemen laughed out of the right corners of their mouths, and a murmur ran about in which the term "old granny" seemed to please those who heard it. I had not been wrong ; there was something very humanising about this river Bure.

The departing yachts waved to those on shore, and the shore shouted back, "See you at Horning!" "Anchor at Potter Heigham, will you?" "We're on Hickling Broad to-morrow ; wait for us!"

There was a chorus of such shouts, and the essence of every chorus was the same. As the little fleet sailed away into that unknown Broads region, it flung back its coil of greeting or its promise of future meeting. This river-bank, I should say, was as good an orchestra-stall as any foreigner could hope to secure, from which to view the true play of English life and feeling. I should like to have had a sceptical Frenchman seated no farther away than the next barrel ; I should have enjoyed seeing his supercilious sneer relax into a smile of recognition. For there is this and much more of good in a Frenchman : he knows the features and the very form of Pleasure by heart, and even when an enemy lays down his arms to that beloved goddess, he will be among the first to smile his approval. "*Sapristi ! Mais ils s'amuseant, ces Anglais !*" my sneering Frenchman would have cried out, if one such had been my companion on that adjacent barrel-side ; and in the language of some other barbarians from across the sea, this exceedingly intelligent reflection would have proved him as being "dead right." "These English" were, in truth, amusing themselves prodigiously here in this ridiculous pool of a river. The game of pleasure, moreover, was being played with an ease and a finish, as well as a knowledge of how to get the most out of a little,

that might well have been a lesson to certain owners of giant continents, with inland seas for lakes, and rivers deep and wide enough to swallow up a hundred Bures.

There was another thing that pleased me. Neither old age, nor the sometimes disqualifying fact of having been only recently born, was considered as a bar, apparently, to this cruise among the grasses. One old gentleman, with a valiant beard and the hat of a desperado, was starting forth in a canoe. He was paddling with the science of twenty; he was also whistling a profane air, a concert-hall ditty, to his dog, who sat listening, gravely, in the bows. The canoe was out of sight before the chorus of "Honey, O ma honey!" was done. As the boat was lost amid the shrubbery, the yellow dog was still a graven image of intentness. "Sir Harry's off on his yearly cruise." "'E is hindeed, an' as 'earty a gent as 'andles a hoar." "Same dog, too, isn't it?" "Hit's halways a yaller dog; these ten years there's been five, but they's halways yaller. Yes, my lord, one moment an' hi'm with you."

The speakers were a man in a slouch hat and a rustic sailor. The slouch hat and another slouch hat had been busily cleaning their own boat, a yard away, this half-hour; they were now

putting their supplies aboard, and the farmer-sailor was helping them. The two shabby boatmen were sorry-looking tramps, and they had been working like niggers. It was a relief, and yet no surprise, to learn they were noblemen. Their present disguise—the one considerably reserved, as a rule, for foreign travel—ought to have betrayed their true rank to us long since.

They were soon off, their yawl-rigged boat cutting some pretty capers before they got her well under way. A large yacht followed them, bearing away under a towering mass of sail. But then there was a large family aboard. That particular family had been a fine lesson in how easy a thing it is to do the natural thing. Why stop away from a cruise because there happens to be a bran-new babe in the family? For the past ten years, at least, there must always have been an infant in arms in that particular household. Why, therefore, leave the baby of the year at home? If one has only children enough, one attains doubtless to a fine height of independence,—in no more awe of a puling infant than of mewling kittens. To this high plane of reasoning had come this family of ten. Number eleven was to be no spoiler of fun; it was brought too, as was also a cage of white mice. The spectacle of

those white mice pleased me uncommonly. Bringing the baby along was proof of rare originality ; but the addition of the white mice was assuredly an inspiration of genius. Who but geniuses are entirely natural? I may have a wrong conception of the congruous, but white mice struck me as a most fitting and delectable addition to any boat's company cruising on the Broad.

These things it was which made it pleasant to sit by the river. We had well-nigh forgotten the original impulse of our coming : why become actors when the parts were being played for us? Thus, for a time, we sat, looking out upon the movement and the gay confusion ; we noted still, as in an agreeable trance we would not have broken, the pictures in the river—the blacks of painted hulls replaced by the whites of flapping sails ; the figures of the sailors, the yachtsmen, and the women, grotesquely painted upon the limpid mirror ; the dashes of crimson and the streaks of cobalt-blue—movable splashes of colour that followed the human figures begirt with their belts and sashes ; the green rim, along the more distant shores, made by the nodding grasses—and we marked that all of it, the movement, the colour, and the bits of the outlying country, were framed by the half-moon of the bridge's dark arch. One had

a sense of the outer world of moving grain-fields without actually looking out upon it. The triumphant crow of the cock, that went well with the ripple of the water, brought the homely music of the farmyard down to the river-bank. In this moment of high-noon opulence, it was sensation enough to feel the penetrating sweetness of this delicate-breathed English summer; to see the vapour rise, a golden mist, veiling the golden-tinted earth; and to follow the sweep of the overarching blue,—a sky that was carrying, as lightly as this blue ribbon of a river, its fleet of sail, its own argosies of sunlit clouds. Before such a scene, a barrel was a seat good enough for a king.

Presently we were almost alone upon the river-bank. The hubbub and noise had well-nigh died out. Yacht after yacht had left us. The strong-voiced young yachtsmen, the agitated parsons, the ladies in distress over missing pieces of luggage, the infants, and the white mice,—all had sailed away.

This was our moment. We awoke from our trance and became practical. There were questions to be asked about boats.

CHAPTER II

A WROXHAM COUNCIL

Toward a certain low shed we bent our steps. Every nautical experience that could happen to a primitive, weather-beaten boathouse, on an inland river, had come to pass within that lowly shed. It had been the real rallying-point of the Bure fleet; knots of sailors had filled it, and distracted young women had hurriedly rescued brothers and husbands from its dark interior. For a small shed it appeared to have a vast storage capacity. Tons of anchors had been dragged from its earthen floor; miles of rope had been trailed through its open door; and cushions enough to fit out a Henley regatta had been borne from its shelves to the yachts' decks. It was now as silent as a tomb. A man was standing in the low doorway, behind whom a canoe, in process of building, was outlined in the gaunt interior. The man, the canoe, and a huge sign alone were left as

reminders of the morning's heavy business. The sign itself, in any other rural village, might have been taken in the light of a joke ; in Wroxham the sign was instantly accepted as only a natural feature of the rustic transformation scene—"Yachts on hire for Holland, the Hook, and Zuyder Zee." Why be surprised at that, after the morning's hot work in surprises? To learn that an expedition for the North Pole was in contemplation, that one would, indeed, presently set forth thither from this bed of lily-pads, would fail to stir one's blood—one's capacity for surprise had given out.

Meanwhile, the man standing in the shed's doorway had come towards us. Lean of shape and keen of eye, he was looking down upon us, a moment later, with a smile that had in it just the right flavour of sympathy. For his answers to our questions we had found dispiriting ; they were certainly not the ones we had come down from London to hear.

"Sorry indeed I am, sir, but there's not a boat left. Those two yonder are off to-morrow. The very last boat I had was that yawl yonder"; and the man's eyes followed the last leave-taker, now going down stream, as he might the vanishing shape of a friend. Then he sat down, squarely facing us, that he might give us the full measure of his kindly

regret. The gray eyes were more than kindly ; they were centres of shrewdness and intelligence. One felt certain the owner of them might be trusted to settle a much larger destiny than a cruise in inland waters.

“Now, if ’twas only to the Hook you were going,” he had begun, with cheery encouragement ; and then he caught our smile, and was answering it. “You see, sir, it’s as easy to do the Hook and Holland as it is the Broads, an’ in a way, as you may say, it’s a better business ; for Holland’s better known. It’s been more writ up ; an’ there’s nothin’ like writin’ up a country to make it known.” (In one man’s mind, at least, literature had its solid uses.) “There’s a gentleman I’ve heard of, a Mr. Boughton, —you may know him, sir ; he’s a painter, an’ well known, they tell me,—whose writin’s have made Holland very fashionable. An’ so I thought as how we’d do it on the Broads. An’ a fine bit of business I’ve made out of the venture. You see, when we goes to Holland we sails right away down to Yarmouth, across the German Ocean, to the canals, and there you are, don’t you see?” We gasped a little ; this easy stepping across from green meadows to Dutch canals, with the trifling obstacle of an ocean between, took the breath away a bit. But the smiling lips above the beard

were moving. "It's a grand trip, sir; and our boats is as comfortable as a ship's cabin. In the busy season there ain't a boat to be had. I'm more sorry than I can speak it, I am, as I can't oblige you; but——" Here he paused suddenly, and clutched at his beard as he unhooked his lean arms. Had he been a Yankee skipper, he would have brought his bony hand down upon his knee with a ringing whack. For he had thought of something, and the something was greatly to our advantage. Being an Englishman and a "letter of yachts on hire," he did not so far forget himself; he merely clutched at his beard, letting his eyes sparkle, as he cried out exultingly, "But there's the *Vacuna*! As sure as I'm born, there's the *Vacuna*! She's not been let this season. She's a 'private,' as we calls gentlemen's yachts. Jameson has her to let." Then he stopped speaking to stand up suddenly; and then he began to shout, with his lips cupped within the hollow of his hands. The shout rang out over our heads towards the bridge. A man with a sailor's swagger was crossing the bridge. "Davy! I say, Davy! Has Jameson let the *Vacuna* yet?"

The sailor-clad figure turned, stopped, squared its arms on the bridge's parapet, and "He haven't" came from the shaven lips.

"Then bring the jolly-boat round, will you, and Jameson? Tell him I've a party looking for a yacht. I want to show the *Vacuna*. Get along lively, will you?"

But the sailor had some business of his own to transact before starting forth upon any errand in which the question of speed was involved. His business partook of the nature of an inspection; it demanded time and deliberation, and both were ungrudgingly given. The sailor's face, a long, thin one, but richly tinted by sun and winds, with a nose that had apparently gone to other less elemental sources for its tinting, hung over the bridge for a full moment; a pair of particularly keen blue eyes meanwhile made a comprehensive survey of the "party" seated beneath them. Presently the arms were lifted from off the parapet and were shoved downwards into deep pockets presumably, as the face broke into a half smile. The man nodded, turned, and his cap was zigzagging above the stone coping.

"He'll be round in a jiffy," said our friend the shed-owner. But we knew better than to be unduly elated by that promise of speed; the mariner's gait was that of a man in love with leisure.

Meanwhile the letter of yachts, with a quickened step, and a great energy upon him, was hurrying us

along the river-bank. He began a swift enumeration of the yacht's merits. She was small ; she was fast ; she had, indeed, been built for the Broads. Being only a five-tonner, and carrying just the right amount of canvas—a main-sail, jib, and foretop-sail—she was particularly quick in coming about, a great feature in sailing these narrow rivers. A moment later, and we were boarding her. She was a beautiful little toy of a yacht, with a neat finish of wood and brass mountings to announce her as a Brahmin among her kind. She was in the highest Broads fashion, bow on to a meadow-patch.

In due time the mysterious jolly-boat, and the unknown Jameson in it, were duly brought round to the side of the boat by the sailor who had looked us over from the bridge. The scrutinising eyes now met ours with a sailor's courtesy, as a quick hand touched the worn yachting-cap. Jameson, the inn-owner, met us on more equal terms ; he smiled and nodded as he puffed himself up the yacht's sides. He was a large man, of genial aspect, and the feat of getting aboard was no light one for two hundred-weight, under this July sun. Mightily he puffed as he proceeded to show us the boat's cabin capacity ; but between the gasps for breath there were sentences emitted, that proved a mind as active as it was

suggestive. As we poked our nose into the two minute yet cosy state-rooms, into the forward hatchway, and into the roomy cabin, he asked us such questions as made the imagination reel and totter. If the boat suited us, would we take it for the season—it was so great a bargain,—or for the year? “Privates” were so hard to get. Why not for life? Surely, one might as well take a passage for eternity, and have done with it, as to contract to float for a year on Norfolk rivers. We contented ourselves with the signing of a lease for a brief fortnight. There are so many other ventures, such as marriage for instance, in which the questions of time and eternity are to be considered, that it is as well to stay the hand when mere pleasure trips are under consideration.

With the signing of our lease Jameson had by no means done with us. After the formalities of the law, we were informally asked to assist at a short council. As a preliminary to the opening of the same, a mound of pillows had been brought from the cabin to make a nest of softness upon the cabin deck. We were soon seated thereon, our counsellors grouping themselves about us. Jameson, with the considerate caution of a large man, had chosen the strip of deck along the stern ; the shed-

owner was airily bestriding the deck-rail, while the sailor-inspector, from the forward hatchway, into whose depths he had swung his sinewy body, with the air of a man who was taking possession of his boat, was once again intently surveying us. Inwardly we were wondering what next was to happen. There appeared to be a formidable series of preliminaries to this going forth into poppy-land. Jameson was visibly excited ; the frequent moppings of his brow proclaimed a critical moment. That the outcome of the conference was to be big with benefit to some one, and that the individual most interested was he whose normal temperature stood at the degree of perpetual perspiration, was clearly enough indicated. Jameson's rosy face was bathed in sweat. After giving a comprehensive mop of his large handkerchief to his entire physiognomy, he began gaspingly—

“Now that the boat suits you, have you thought of provisioning her, sir ?”

Here was a question indeed. It was our turn to stagger. Provision a yacht, whose future journey lay between rich farmhouses and fields that were the fattest in England ! Surely at no stage of the voyage would we be fifty yards away from the freshest of dairies, walking about on four legs between the

clover and cowslips. One would as soon think of carrying one's dinner along to a Lord Mayor's banquet. Such was the lay view, uttered in full energy of ignorance. Our counsellors dealt with our ignorance in ways that proved they had had frequent occasions before now to reason with the unreasoning ; and though entirely civil, they would not yield an inch. No yacht going on the Broads was properly equipped that did not carry its own provisions along. Indeed, "properly" to provision a yacht, the stores should be sent up from London or Norwich. The shed-owner was very positive on this point. It was on this point that he and Jameson disagreed. For Jameson, you see, owned the village inn ; and the responsibilities of provisioning anything, from a canoe to a full-rigged ship, he was willing, nay, was even anxious, to undertake at the shortest possible notice ; willing also to guarantee full and complete satisfaction with such stores as were provided.

"You'll be restin' quiet this arternoon an' evenin' at the King's Head, sir an' madam. There's a sittin'-room an' as many as two bed-chambers at your pleasure. An' I'll send my man up to Norwich, an' he'll have the boxes down here early in the morning."

The promise of the quiet resting was alluring.

We had not come all the way from metropolitan centres to revel in city pavements and stone walls. As a vision, the King's Head Inn rose up fair in our mind's eye. We had noted its pictorial attractions as we passed it on the highway. With its tiny courtyard, its ruddy, defaced façade, its vines, and its dimity curtains, it had appealed to us as an excellent place in which to dream away a summer. Jameson, on the whole, in view of the beauty of his possessions, we esteemed a modest man. Most large men, indeed, are modest ; it is usually your five-foot-two strutters who go about standing on their mental tiptoes, boasting a height of stature that nature, with a view to their many other advantages, has *considerately* denied them.

“An' now, sir an' madam, there's the essentials, if I may so name them”—Jameson had breezily begun again, as he still mopped his brow with large and powerful gesture. “The essentials—tea an' coffee, a bit o' flour, an' marmalade. If you're lookin' for a tasty bit, there's nothing like salt bacon an' a cut o' good ham ; but salt beef, that's the thing you'll want by you, first and last, for the men, sir.”

Salt beef, it was agreed, should be the bed-rock of our supplies. Then there came an anxious moment ; for Jameson had come to a full stop—the Wroxham

imagination could go no further. The committee on provisions looked at each other with glances that spoke, if ever glances spoke ; but their united efforts failed to whet the gastronomic fancy.

"Jameson," our friend of the shed broke in at last, with a kindly sternness, "is there nothin' else?"

Then it was that Jameson proved himself worthy of his double office of inn-keeper and letter of yachts. "There's the beer, by —— I beg your pardon, my lady ; but if we wasn't forgettin' the beer !" And the beer was noted down in a jiffy.

There was a sense of relief all round. From the hatchway there came a positive snort. The gastronomic fancy was off now at a full gallop. Other things—such agreeable whetters of appetite as "cheese an' bitters," such side-dishes as lettuce and green peas, and a fowl or two cooked, some fresh beef "to start off with," and some cake and turnovers, these came with rattling briskness. "An' is there anything else, Davy?"

Davy, from his cage within the hatchway, blinked his eyes, as he took time to make the tour of his memory. With no inn-ledgers on his mind, he approached the momentous subject with the caution of a family man. "Who's to go with me?" he finally asked, lifting his head inquiringly. "I'll send

Grimes along," Jameson answered slowly. The gift of Grimes appeared to cost him an effort. On Davy's face was written the patient acceptance of the inevitable. All the spirit went out of his voice, as he said, resettling his chin on his crossed arms, "I believe there wasn't any potatoes." "Right you are," cheerily agreed the committee. And with the additional entry of the neglected potatoes the council came to an end. But before the chief counsellor had stepped into his boat, there was a brief but exceedingly impressive aside given in a whisper; it might easily have been heard across to the opposite shore—

"Davy yonder," Jameson's great thumb dug into the air towards the hatchway and the immobile figure framed there, "he'll be goin' with you. As handy a man as is to be found on the Broads. He's known from Lowestoft to Norwich, an' from Norwich to Wroxham, is Davy of Yarmouth. A family man, an' as handy as he is civil an' steady. He's the skipper I'd choose to send with the Queen, Lord bless her!"

Jameson's praise, that might have stirred the sensibilities of a Lord High Chamberlain, left Davy of Yarmouth unmoved. He and our friend the shed-owner exchanged, however, one exceedingly swift and most telling glance. The true meaning

of that glance we came to fathom, later on. It had a not too subtle relation to the beer on board ; also to the ease with which certain reputations are made—and held. Jameson was far too simple and natural a man for any such subtleties. He belonged among the salt of earth, who believe, and who believe twice, all that which they also hear. “You’ll find him as true as steel, an’ as keen, an’ I’m glad I have him idle, for he’s the best skipper on the Broads. An’ now, sir, you’ll be wanting a bit of a nightcap, now and again. If it comes on to rain, a bottle of the inn’s old Scotch will keep the wet from striking in. Come, Davy, I must be going back. At your service, sir, and yours, madam.” And, with a grand bow, down into the blue of the Bure Davy rowed him silently, we having chosen to stroll at our leisure along the shores.

We had ample time to rehearse the morning’s scene ; among other things, to reflect how active a faculty was the Wroxham talent for kindness, when encased in either a lean or a generous Norfolk frame. As for my friend the shed-owner, I think of him to this day with a quickening of the pulse. Here was a man who had gone forth from his own business to do us a great favour ; who had not a penny to make out of the transaction, and yet who

gave us of his best, both of counsel and of courtesy; who, in a word, had opened the door of our holiday for us, with a gentleman's smile and a friend's warmth of greeting. A humble boat-builder, coatless, hatless, with bared arms, two thrifty patches adorning each knee-cap, yet might my Lord Chesterfield have gone to school to him with benefit; for in the matter of true feeling, which the writer of certain model letters in deportment omitted to state is the first essential of real breeding, did our friend the shed-owner have much to teach that paragon of English peers.

The promised idyl of quiet at the King's Head was no poetic flourish. Jameson's promises came true. Several items not down in the compact made the afternoon and evening pass all too quickly. There was a garden behind the inn that ran down to the river, and the bees and the birds and the geese made one kind of melody. Some Cambridge students awaiting their boats made another, as they sat in the tiny arbours, drinking their beer and their tea. Farmers in gaily-painted carts stopped for their glass, tossing it off as they sat in their high seats. Rustic customers filled the inn bar-room, their rough voices louder and louder as the night wore on in its stillness. At the hour when London was dining, Wroxham went to

its rest ; and Jameson, with untiring zeal—a zeal that had watched over our tea, had carved our dinner roast, and had questioned the excellence of each separate article of food—was now lighting us to our cosy inn quarters. In our ears, as we sank into



BOAT-HOUSE NEAR WROXHAM

slumber, was the sound of a lapping river ; pictures of boats, sailing, sailing away, swam before our eyes ; and meadows that miraculously became cushions, and cushions that turned into white mice—such was the agreeable medley that cradled us into the fairyland of sleep, where all fables come true.

CHAPTER III

THE START

THE next morning our getting aboard made a stir in Wroxham. A pleasurable degree of excitement was circling about the inn, its big barn, the village butchers' shops, and our jolly-boat.

"She's called the *Pride of the Broads*, sir,—an exhibition boat, an' as fast as any on the Broads," was Davy's introduction of the trig-looking row-boat he brought alongside the inn garden.

She had need of her heart of stout English oak. Green things that had been growing but a moment before were piled high upon her seats; and boxes and baskets innumerable were fitted dexterously into her bottom. Grooms stopped from a rubbing down of horses to trundle wheelbarrows groaning with provisions enough to fit out the Queen's navy; butchers, in snowy aprons, came to the river-bank to deposit their bundles of fresh meats; the

bakers brought their bread, and the grocers their groceries. Most of the village, in truth, came to the river-bank to assist in our embarkation. And we liked it. Surely, there are few situations more trying for a high adventurous spirit than to start forth on an expedition from the midst of an unmoved, unfeeling world. Humble mortals, who have missed, by the mere accident of birth, being kings, prima donnas, or presidents, may be forced to return to such a world ; but those who have to do with the sending forth of pleasure-seekers should see to it that at least a pretence of regret should strike a few flattering chords at the appropriate moment of departure. The King's Head Inn, at least, knew its trade well. It sent forth its little world of cruising parties with something better than the mere counterfeit presentment of regret. A French innkeeper might possibly have played the part with more affluence of gesture and a greater finish of phrase ; but Jameson's hearty English feeling gave to his conception of the *rôle* the flavour of a personal emotion.

“Good-bye to you, sir and madam, and a fine voyage to you, and the best of weather ! An' Davy, you're to do your best, my lad ; and if anything's wrong, just send a wire, an' I'll drop down to see what's amiss.”

When words like these are flung out upon a moist English morning air—the figure that utters them wearing upon his brow beads of perspiration, as proof of his honest, long hours' work in your behalf ; when he has so trained his little world that out from the barn come tousled grooms, from the kitchen neat maids, and from the inn itself a smiling landlady, with a couple of round-eyed infant babes, to curtsy and smile respectfully, you may count on setting forth upon your journey with a singular lightness of spirit.

On the bridge there was also a goodly number of onlookers. Along the shore, close to the boat's moorings, our friend of the day before—the shed-owner—was as busy as a man can be, who was fitting out half-a-dozen boats, yet had he time for a hearty greeting. “You've the best of weather, an' it'll hold. The breeze is light, but steady. A pleasant voyage, and good luck to you !” His smile was as good as a blessing.

Now at last the great moment had come. Our sails were set, the two-foot gang-plank had been lifted ; communication with the shore was at an end, and we were drifting amid-stream. Now that we were fairly afloat, there was an instant of speculative suspense. Would the yacht fit into the river ? The width of

the deck would surely fill the stream and its rails overlay the grassy banks. Yet, narrow as was the watery highway, a boat under full sail was coming up the stream; she was to be met and passed. Again there was a curious mounting of the pulse-beats. We passed the up-coming boat without so much as grazing the bank. Imperceptibly, all the while, we were floating farther and farther out upon the river; fainter and fainter grew the faces of the farmers and plough-boys assembled to see us start forth; and between the bushy tree-boughs the outlines of the Wroxham houses were soon merged in the blur of the blue and green distance.

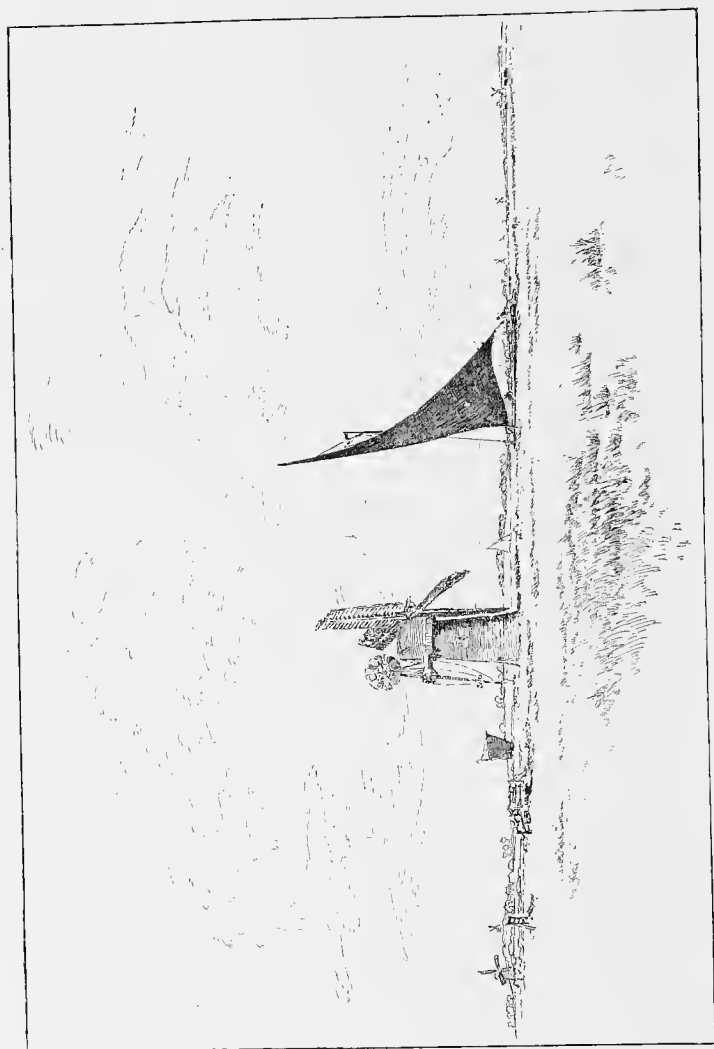
Meanwhile, from the first moment of our starting forth, there had been pregnant signs of trouble aboard. Davy, the skipper, and his mate were at odds. The mate was a buttonless stable-boy, with a face and smile as open as his shirt. Ten minutes before we started he had been rubbing down a sweating roan. But neither the lad's boyish smile, nor his deftness in the art of stowing away, had power to soften the sharp edge of our skipper's dislike; he took no pains whatever to conceal his scorn of stable-boys playing at sailing. We had barely gone a dozen yards on our way, before there came a deep growl of his displeasure; for our sails were hanging as

limp as wet linen, and the infant mate was ordered to test his strength at quanting. Against his shoulder he had promptly proceeded to plant one of the long poles or quants that lay along the cabin. Securely fixing its padded leather top against his narrow chest, he then began slowly to walk the deck, pressing the long pole into the mud of the river-bed.

“Here, take the helm ! A little more strength’s what’s needed over that quant !” Davy cried out, with a note of impatience in his voice, after watching the lad’s purpling face. But even under the pressure of his own strong muscles, the yacht was still crawling at a snail’s pace. Another ten minutes, and Davy had hailed a man going up stream in a row-boat : “I say, give us a start, will you ?” The man stopped rowing, swung his rope aboard, and himself immediately after. Without a word he seized the remaining pole, and began walking the deck on the port-side. For a good fifteen minutes there was only the sound of the men’s deep breathing to be heard. “We don’t get a true wind till we get to the open,” puffed Davy, in an explanatory aside. In another moment we had swept clear of the green shores. A fresh breeze, blowing across the meadows, now filled our sails. The quants came presently to a rest, and Davy was once more at the helm. “You see, sir, I had to have

help round that first reach. That 'ere," said Davy, with a dig of his thumb, contemptuously indicating the figure of Grimes bending over the ropes in the stern, "that 'ere ain't no more use 'n a baby for quantin'." Then the lad was sharply ordered to "stand by the ropes."

Davy, it was not difficult to see, was as capricious as the wind against which he had been railing. Sailors and women, I have observed, are apt to have a great variety of climates with which to make happy, and also to torture, those subject to their moods. As a theorist, Davy of Yarmouth was above his fellows in a religious conception of what weather should come to those "goin' on a cruise." A Norfolkman, indeed, on these rivers of his, must feel himself to be both host and guide; his courtesy must be lined with a conscience. The mere study of tides, a patient acceptance of the caprices of the wind, and knowing one's river as a man knows the face of his own child—these are only the rudiments of a science every skipper must master before he is counted worthy even to sail a boat. But sailing on the Broads demanded a certain finishing grace. We had gone only a short quarter of a mile when Davy, in an opening speech, gave us the text of his sermon on the ethics of nautical conduct.



SAILING ACROSS THE FIELDS

"You see, sir an' madam, if you'll allow, this is how I looks at a cruise on the Broads. It all depends on the skipper, I says. You may never see me again, sir, or you, madam; but as sure as I'm talkin', the pleasure of a party on board a yacht is in the skipper's hands. If he's rusty or crabby, your pleasure's gone an' your money's wasted. Grimes, my lad, you may bring me a glass. I drinks to our voyage an' your good healths. An' lively, mind, Grimes, for there's a boat comin' up to windward."

Deep was the glass in which the success of our cruise was drunk, and swift was the tossing off of the foamy beer by our skipper's practised hand; for there was not only one, there were a number of boats coming up to windward. The river was a thronged highway. Yachts, barges, yawls, row-boats—such was the flotilla riding between the meadow-banks. To the sunny whiteness of the bulging sails was contrasted the novelty of the prevailing background—trees, farmhouses, hayricks, garden walls, herds of cattle, windmills—it was a landscape through which the moving sails seemed to play the *rôle* of winged figures. Gradually the charm and beauty of this river life began to work their spell. The zigzagging of the yacht from shore to shore was soon accepted as a novel way



HOVETON CHURCH

of getting into closer touch with the river-bank, the narrowness of the river and the low, close shores giving one the sense of being at one and the same moment on land and on water. All the usual signs and sights seen from a yacht's deck were forgotten, and were replaced by fresh and novel experiences. For the usual horizon seen from aboard a yacht there were fringes of larches, behind which the blues of the hills and of the sky met. To test the course of the wind, we looked at the tossing of the tree-boughs, and to note its strength, there was the waving grain to take the place of foam-capped water. The sails we met came from behind barns, and the bows rounded the bark of tree-trunks. To speak a ship we had but to shout across the meadows. As far as the eye could see, the landscape was dotted with white wings. Rarely in among the low landscape spread before us did the river show its sunned face, so that the boats in the narrow channel seemed to walk upon the meadows. The church-spire of Horning and the tower of Hoveton crowning the hilltops alone appeared stable, the ever-moving sails giving to all the surroundings a shifting and fluctuant aspect. From the middle of this little river there was a new earth to be seen, with which we

kept in touch. This thin crust of earth's rim overhanging the limpid stream, would it break and give way, at what seemed an inevitable series of collisions at every tack we made? We would appear to be within an inch of swamping a young forest of striplings; our bow would dash into the swirling grasses, making a wet switching sound as it ran its short nose among the tall reeds; then away we would swing, and be amid-stream before we or the grasses had had time to right matters.

The breeze had strengthened. Our sails were full, and for a good fifteen minutes or more we had a "true bit" of sailing. Along with the wind the tide of our skipper's spirits had risen. In his eye there shone fresh life and vigour; his shrewd face, with its long thin nose, and the clever wrinkles on brow and chin, was set about with smiles. A sun high in the heavens, a fair wind springing up, full lockers, and only two cabin passengers—what could man or sailor ask more? Davy's voyage from shore to shore, as the *Vacuna* tacked and came about, was a saunterer's gay meeting with succeeding groups of friends and acquaintances. I have rarely known a man whose bowing acquaintance was at once so large and varied. No bargeman passed us but it was, "Hallo, Jim! Any news down

Yarmouth way?" Or it was, "How are you, sir? Glad to see you down so early this year," to two elderly gentlemen sailing their own yacht. It is certain, if any man could humanise an English river, could thaw its reserve into Gallic fervour, it was Davy. For rustic on shore and for bargeman, for the fisherman mending his net and the girls working in the fields, Davy had his smile and his jest. He was as full of gossip as a provincial newspaper, and as generous with his news of the day as a street bulletin.

For my own part, I had never been on such intimate terms with an inland country. We brushed the reedy banks as if the grasses were a friend's garment, and the branches of the trees, in their turn, swept the puffing cheeks of our sails. Geese and swans betrayed their hiding by sailing forth from their ambush, to menace and, if possible, to affright, and finding we meant no harm, ranged their battalions in line, forming a winged escort. The cows, lying or standing, took their place in our talk; they would lift their heads as we bore down upon their clover-patch, raising their mild eyes, as they stopped to listen; and then once more we would hear the sound of their slow breath upon the grass, and the rhythmic switching of their

tails. The open cottage-doors took us into the privacy of family life ; the farmer, shouting to his plough-boy across his garden-patch, told us dinner was ready ; and the voices within denoted the exact temperature of the mistress's temper. Rustic calling to rustic proved the Norfolk preference for continuing a strictly apostolic succession in the matter of name-giving. As for the houses themselves,—when you have sailed into a man's front door, missing it by a mere matter of a few feet ; when you have managed to graze the side of his barn, in lieu of demolishing it ; when your bow has swept his wife's milk-cans hanging on the fence—why, for the life of you, you cannot help feeling that somewhat close relations have been established between your boat and those on shore.

All the while the wind and river between them were taking us on with quickening speed. The outlook changed with kaleidoscopic swiftness. A sward of turf with grazing cattle would be replaced by a fenman's cottage blocking the sky-distance at the head of a dike ; and then a thatched farmhouse, with its wall-spaces abloom with roses, would be succeeded by the Georgian Gothic gables of a gentleman's country-seat ; on the next tack, a daub-and-wattle hut beneath a thick growth of trees would be a significant reminder

of those more economical builders in brushwood and clay, with their more strictly utilitarian purposes.

Beneath the huts, the pointed Gothic of the lily-petals were dipping in and out of water as clear as a mountain brook. Above the flowers and a sweep of lawn—the velvet carpet a gentleman had considerably spread beneath the feet of his cattle—rose a fine Tudor mansion; near the house a red-and-white-striped tent, a wicker table, two low cushioned chairs, a book and a parasol made an open-air setting, into which one could fit a scene from the well-known comedy which the world that lives in Tudor mansions plays more or less well. The cottagers' huts and the gentlemen's country-seats were reminders of other forgotten comedies, played by those men now dead and gone who peopled the land and tilled it when Elizabeth's troopers were quartered in Norwich. These farmhouses we were leaving behind us had been sending up turkeys to London for Christmas before Cromwell's soldiers went about butchering statues in parish churches. What a motley procession has walked those dusty highways yonder! The friars, the hooded lepers, the glittering cavalcades of crusaders, of bishops, of kings' soldiers, and of kings and their queens, in the splendour of their state, going up from Yarmouth to Norwich. Representa-

tives of these we have still among us. The commercial traveller, seated in the Norwich express, is the modern survivor of those busy tradesmen who, three centuries ago, carried finely textured garments down to Yarmouth, that the Russian of his day might adorn himself with a Norfolk sash of gaudy calimanco, and the Spanish hidalgo might fling a cloak about him of genuine Norwich camlet.

All this, and more of the same kind, shaped our idle thoughts as we lay back upon our pillows. This drifting along under full sunlight, with the fresh breezes blowing one into that state of simmering content which living much in the open air brings to cockney bodies and souls, made thinking seem, indeed, a clumsy performance. We were in a golden calm, which Davy's voice soon rudely disturbed.

CHAPTER IV .

A NORFOLK WHERRY

“It’s a bit ticklish, this wind—a bit ticklish,” Davy suddenly broke out. “I don’t like the way it’s dodgin’ about. It’s very treacherous,—full of variety, that’s what it is. It’s a good deal like women, beggin’ your pardon, ma’am.” And he brought his helm round with a quick turn. A reach farther on there was a “quieter bit of sailin’,” as the skipper termed a steadier wind ; and then he went on with what was still in his mind. That something worth listening to was coming, we knew by the way he was cocking his head at the landscape.

“Variety! Lord bless you! No woman as is worth havin’ but is full of it. There’s my wife, God bless her! I wouldn’t part with her for all the gold in England. But you’d have all the variety you’d want on a washin’-day when it’s wet, an’ neuralligy’s a-settin’ in. I’ve been through all that,



A NORFOLK WHERRY

I have. There's nothin' like it—for variety. An' when you come in yourself, wet to the skin, an' lookin' forward to a bit o' rest an' warmth by your own fireside, an' you see your wife's head tied up, an' she a-bendin' over the wash-tubs, you know what's before you, an' you just haul in your sheet and drop anchor, that's what you do. An' you do it werry quiet. I've been through all that, I have. Lively there, my lad, lively! I've a bit of tackin' to do just here. Werry ticklish she is." And Davy, with his eye on his sail, relapsed once more into silence. The silence was soon broken; the wind sent us headlong into an eel-hut, and only Davy's skill in a quick handling of the ropes kept us clear of the bank. No sooner were we fairly started on our course amid-stream than the tiller was brought round with a mighty sweep, and Davy was shouting to Grimes:

"Let go your jib! Let her go, I say! Can't you see there's a boat comin' up to windward?"

The boat that was passing us to windward was a sight to enchain the eyes. It was a huge craft, yet it was riding the narrow waters with a swift and confident ease that put to shame the paces of our own deft *Vacuna*. As the full, mahogany-tinted sail bore down upon us, for one dark moment its

convex surface made a brown tent between us and the sky. Then the tent sailed by, and the foreground was clear once more. The boat itself, we then saw, was as myriad-hued as the plumage of a tropical bird. Crude, strong colours had been lavished on hull, cabin, and mast; even the quants lying along the ochre-tinted deck were a vivid cobalt-blue. The boat's deep crimsons, greens, and yellows presented strangely un-English colour-contrasts; the quiet grays and greens of the landscape became all at once surprisingly sombre. A caique strayed from the turquoise blue of the Adriatic, and adrift among these Norfolk lily-pads, could scarcely have brought to the eyes a greater surprise than did this survival, doubtless, of the old Norse love of the barbaric in colour.

Meanwhile our skipper was giving the boat and its crew his customary greeting: "How are you, Cross? How's the missus?" The man at the helm gravely returned the salute. Standing waist-high above the low cabin, with hand on tiller, he might have been cut in bronze. Only his eyes seemed alive. Davy, the set of our sails, Grimes tugging away at the ropes, those of us grouped along the stern—all these details had been taken in at a glance, with that swiftness of vision which is the gift of birds and mariners. The skipper gave no

more concern to his own full sail, which was tied, than if it had been a solid piece of nature rooted in the meadows. A single passenger was to be seen on deck. On a mound of nut-brown silk pillows, close to the mast, reclined at full length a young and lovely girl. As she lay there, her eyes fixed on the pages of a book, her hair, a light-brown glory, was spread about her, drying in the breeze. The other accessories to the picture—the pale, æsthetic silk curtains draping the cabin windows, the glimpses of rugs and hangings within the cabin, a mandoline lying on the low divan, a blur of pink roses massed in a huge blue vase—all these were only insignificant details beside the one compelling presence—that of the young beauty lying on her bed of pillows, with the tendrils of her hair afloat in the wind.

As we passed, our full sail cast a shadow on the girl's open page. Except for the sibilant sound of the parting waters at our bows, there was none other to suggest the passing of two boats. As our sail's shade fell upon the wherry's deck, the lady, who had been reading, looked up. Our glances met; there was a moment of mutual staring. Then, with a quick start of recognition and a little cry, the beauty with the unbound hair started to her feet, and was crying out to us—

“You—on the Broads!”

It was Violet Belmore. Swift as had been her leap to her feet, it was no quicker than her ringing order to the wherryman: “Come about, Cross! I wish to talk to this lady.”

With the grace and celerity of a swan turning, the wherry described a neat circle, and was soon sailing alongside. Over the aft deck-rail a lively fusillade of talk began. Question succeeded question, the answers, all given at once, crossing each other in mid-air. This much we gathered. After Mrs. Gower-Granger’s little dinner, Miss Belmore had found what was left of July might be given either to Norway or the Broads. “Now think of any one really hesitating, particularly if one has done Norway! Of course I chose the Broads, and we’ve such a jolly lot on board! You must know them. They’re at Horning, taking a spin on their wheels; we’ve four bicycles on board. They sent me off to fetch a friend from London who comes by the Norwich express; we’re bound for Wroxham now to pick him up. Such a charming American! You must meet him. Won’t you come to dinner to-night? Do! We’re dining at the Inn at Horning Ferry.”

“What time?”

“Eight sharp. We do get so famished. Good-bye. We must be getting on now; the train’s due in an hour. Good-bye!” Miss Belmore kept waving her hand over the deck-rail as the wherry came about with a spin.

Now many things, doubtless, would happen to us on this amazing little river. Other visions would come up, from out of its blue deeps, to ravish our eyes. But I doubt if anything more surprising than an invitation to dinner, on the high seas as it were, was to be hoped for; and surely no other apparition would equal that of Violet Belmore, lying among her nut-brown pillows, or standing out, for that one, last, enrapturing moment, framed in her loosened hair, her lithe figure outlining its graceful curves against the green masses of verdure. Such beauty as hers was enough to enchant the eyes, in whatever place one might chance to light upon so ravishing a spectacle; but in a cotton print and a sailor’s jersey, under the softened radiance of an English afternoon sunlight, with all the lines of the lovely face so naturally set—for what woman with her hair down but looks twenty times younger and fresher?— I for one understood the moment of perfect silence which followed the lady’s exit: it partook of the nature of that

applause which is too deep for explosive expression. Davy was the first to recover.

“Steady, my lad, steady! We’re in danger o’ capsizin’!” he said dryly, addressing no one in particular. Following the laugh this caused, came again a sobering period. We talk of beauty as if it were a common thing, as easy to be had as buttercups in June; but let a truly beautiful creature appear, and you can gauge by the change that her mere appearance brings, how rare is the phenomenon.

It is quite certain that after seeing and meeting Miss Belmore, the river and the landscape seemed unaccountably changed; such novelties as they had to offer sank, for a time, to the plane of a pitiful insignificance. This sylvan earth, even the heavens above, with their celestial blues and whites, were accounted as mere side-shows. We had met and been hailed by a friend, and the landscape was now no more to us than a landscape; a girl’s voice had filled its wide spaces, and like the human note amid the bird-music of some primeval forest, the ring of that greeting seemed the only sound worth hearing. The river, as we looked out upon it, was as crowded with sails as before, but for us it was empty. Heaven itself, surely, will seem as empty if, in the hosts of

seraphim and cherubim who people it, we find no friends, but only tuneful strangers.

For the first time since starting forth, a certain degree of restlessness attacked those on board. The man of the party stood about with his hands in his pockets, and whistled; a retrospective dreaminess in the whistling went well with the wandering eyelids. This was one phase of the change Miss Belmore's appearance had wrought. I openly confess to doing a bit of dreaming on my own account. A bewildering series of evening entertainments, in which Bengal lights and ice-cold beer were to alternate with a high grade of music, and conversation of no mean order, suggested themselves in the light of return banquets to that coming dinner. My dreaming was of an entirely practical order.

"Davy, have you the *pâté-de-fois-gras* on board?"

"I really don't know, ma'am. Grimes, my lad, see if we've them little stone pots aboard with them pork pateys."

"They're in this 'ere locker. There's a dozen of 'em; they're close to the soups, ma'am," quickly answered Grimes.

"That's all right. *Pâté-de-fois-gras* and a sprig of lettuce will make a capital *entrée*. We'll dine

with them to-night, and to-morrow night we'll have them."

"Have them? Where are we to have them? How do we know where we shall be? I thought we had come on a cruise. Are we never to have done with dinner-parties?"

Now, it is a curious fact that marriage, among its other peculiarities, appears to develop in the male the irresistible tendency, when plans and projects are under discussion, to persistent resistance. The particular husband on the *Vacuna*, so far from being an exception to this rule, was a more than commonly good example of the talent for objecting, that may be developed by the friction of constant companionship. Those who knew him took the growl of his protest smilingly, as one takes the playful snarl of an amiable dog. Davy of Yarmouth took a different view of this moment of marital disagreement. He wrinkled his brow sympathetically, and there passed into his eyes that glance married men give other married men when they wish to convey the intelligence that they also have been there, to use the descriptive slang of our day. This Davy was signalling with all his might to the gentleman with his hands in his pockets. He even took an unnecessary tack, a slight change

in the wind acting as a breezy excuse for changing the conversation.

“Grimes, my lad, lively there! We’ve to look mighty sharp. The wind’s changin’. I don’t like the way it’s dodgin’ about.”

“Still full of variety, Davy?”

“Yes, my lady.”

“Tame winds and tame women,—I would never have thought either would be to your taste, Davy.”

“Right you are, my lady. No tame women for me. They’re best mated to tyrants and giants and such as are mismade by nature, actin’ as a kind of balm to misfortune. But it’s a true woman the rest of us longs for and gives our life-blood for, and gets, if we’re lucky. Variety! Lord bless you! It’s what keeps a woman sweet an’ makes ’em as entertainin’ as a circus.” And Davy laughed the laugh of a rich experience. Nor was he alone in his laughter. There was a moment’s silence after the laugh, but only for a moment. A genuine freshening of the wind sent us headlong into a row-boat, which Davy’s nimbleness about the ropes and management of the tiller alone kept us from entirely demolishing.

“Let go your jib! Let go, I say!” Davy was

shouting. "There's a wherry rounding that 'ere reach."

We were more than halfway about before Grimes could loosen his sheet. The boat might have been the sister wherry to Miss Belmore's. There was the same lavish use of colour ; the sail was as huge and as rich in browns ; there were pots of flowers along the narrow deck and silk curtains at the tiny windows. Our course brought us almost alongside. We were so near that the faces on board the wherry were as close as those on our own yacht. But the eyes that met ours were not friendly ; they made nothing of the moment. We were told as plainly as eyes can speak that we were as naught in the Bure landscape. We or the cows on the meadow, it was all one to these stolid English eyes. Our skipper had his own comment to pass on the boat and its company.

"She's a pleasure wherry, too, an' a new one ; but there's little enough pleasure on board, I'm thinkin'. She's from down Yarmouth way, an' it's the rich brewer, Mr. X., as built her, an' that's his family, I take it. But the wherry's built for trade, an' so is the gentleman, an' not for pleasure." And Davy shook his lean frame mightily with the strength of his laughter.

“The wherry’s built for trade an’ not for pleasure, I hold,” he reiterated a moment later. “They goes light over the water, that I can’t deny; they rides the water like a bird. But a yacht seems more ship-shape for a gentleman’s pleasure, I always says. They’re a wonderful handy craft, an’ll sail as close to the wind as any ever I did see, an’ they’re just made to order for these ’ere reaches an’ rivers, sir. You see, sir, it’s the way a wherry’s mast is stepped that makes her handy,—that an’ the sail’s bein’ without a boom. Her mast yonder is to the extreme aft. An’ the length of her, an’ the breadth,—they runs from forty-five to fifty feet long with a beam of ten to twelve,—an’ the lowness of her hull, it all helps. Just look at that ’ere wherry roundin’ that reach. Ain’t she a purty sight?”

The wherry that was rounding the reach was evidently no light “pleasure” craft: this was the true wherry. Its patched and darned sail had an unmistakable, professional seriousness; and the man at the helm, as we came alongside a tack or two farther on, was as patched and darned as his sail. Both the skipper and his craft told their own story. It was one of long days and nights sailing in open and narrow waters; of innumerable loadings and unloadings at the crowded Norwich and Yarmouth

quays ; of a life lived in a perpetual round of weighing anchor and of hoisting sail.

Davy had his usual interchange of river courtesies with the rough-featured helmsman. Then, as the breeze went light, our skipper set his foot once more upon the seat, resting his body against the tiller as he held it lightly by one hand. By these signs we knew that the gift of speech was once more to descend upon Davy of Yarmouth.

“Many’s the long month I’ve wherried it,” he now mused, “along these rivers. Man an’ boy I’ve lived my life on the Broads, all but the seven year I was at sea. An’ long years they was, though a man ought to see the world, whatever it costs, I’ve always held. Well, sir an’ madam, if I may make so bold, I’ve known what it was to sweat an’ shine like the darkey cooks we’d take aboard on the Florida coast ; an’ my beard an’ hands have been froze with the cold of the Russian seas ; an’ I’ve been lyin’ like a dead man with the Yellow Jack in African waters. But for poorness of livin’ an’ hardship, give me a Norfolk wherry. Poorest fodder on record it is, on board a wherry. A piece of sour bread an’ an onion, a red herring with no head on an’ no gills,—that’s what it is week in an’ week out. If I got a piece of sweet

pork, I felt I was a magistrate ; a cup of tea without milk, I was a mayor ; a bit of home-made bread an' cheese, an' no king was happier. Grimes, my lad, another glass. That breeze do bring a thirst to a man."

It was no breeze that was imparting the bibulous impulse to our skipper ; he was only toasting the present moment of prosperity. There was an entirely honourable elation and a desire to prolong the lyrical moment in the knowledge that with the dark winter he had turned his back on such a past of hardships. And what more hospitable or kindly than for one at a full table to wish to share the good things of the feast with his brethren that were passing by him ?

Davy had hardly finished his glass before a wherry was seen slowly creeping up stream. The lowered sails told us what we knew already, that both wind and tide were against the boat.

"You've the wind dead ahead ; it'll be better farther on !" was Davy's spirited greeting.

Two bronzed, bearded faces were lifted, for both men were at the quants ; and both began to speak in what was to us the unintelligible Norfolk jargon. The quants came to an abrupt rest, and presently the eyes of the two giants glistened, as if with some fever of anticipation. It was a form of fever that

appeared to move to compassionate interest not only Davy but Grimes, who dived into the hatch, to reappear in an instant with two foaming glasses of beer. The quanters sat themselves down on their cabin ; the glasses were emptied at a single toss ; and, as they wiped their beards, they rose, to send across the water the civilities common to men the whole world over, when drinking at another's expense. A sentence or two more of the jargon, and the wherryman were again bending over their quants.

"It's pitiful, it is, to see men working like that, an' not a drop by 'em," was our skipper's sympathetic comment. "As a rule, if they've tuppence by them, they've a mug of pale ale," he went on musingly, as if at a loss to account for the lack of the cheering fluid aboard of the Lowestoft boat. "They're happy enough, though. A wherryman's always happy. Why, I've known fam'lies as has never known another home than a wherry. An' a pleasanter sight it 'ud be hard to find than a hull fam'ly a-settin' together on the deck, of a summer evening, the skipper a-smokin', with his glass beside him, peaceful an' quiet, an' his wife takin' a stitch in his socks. A man had a chance then to save a penny, an' to 'ave a coat at his back an' a full stomach. But now it's the landlords at Yarmouth an' Norwich

as gets it all. The Board of Health was mighty quick in findin' out how poor the accommodations of a wherry was when they seed a way of fillin' their own pockets."

The contemplation of Norfolk municipal depravity had brought gloom along with the moment of retrospect. A moment later Davy's eye lightened, and, as was quite natural, with a more optimistic outlook upon life, he sailed a point or two closer to the wind.

"Ah! this is more like travellin', this is! Go on, *Vacuna!* Fly, my bird, fly!" For at a sudden round of a meadow bank there had come a brisk freshening of the breeze; it was sweeping over the fields, some windmills were whirling their arms as if for a wager; and the wherries we had seen alongside, a moment before, were now sweeping across the fields with the swiftness of birds on the wing.

In point of beauty I have never seen a craft, whether built for man's pleasure or for the furthering of his commercial intercourse, more exactly to my taste than a Norfolk wherry. Far across the meadows a wherry might be seen lying among the tree-boughs, or it might be creeping or sailing or flying before the wind. Whatever its office

or its attitude, to look upon a Norfolk wherry is for the eye to rest on the most picturesque thing afloat. Not the least among its qualities is the way in which a wherry does its hard work; it has an artistic grace, that ease which comes with a perfection of adjustment, when labour takes an outward, festival aspect. Not even the most ancient and weather-worn of wherries ever appeared aware of the sobering fact that it was earning its living.

CHAPTER V

WROXHAM BROAD

“GRIMES, my boy, tie in your sheet, an’ bring me a glass. We’re on the Broad the next tack, an’ there’ll be some sailin’, then, there will!” And once more Davy emptied his glass. A moment later he took the *Vacuna* so close to the tree-boughs that our sail swept the whole breadth of the green façade. The next instant there came a thundering command, “Ease your main-sheet! Ease her, I say! Can’t you see there’s a boat comin’ off the Broad? We’ll have to make another tack. Quick with your jib!” We were more than half-way about before Grimes had loosened his sheet; for in moments of emergency the space between Grimes’ ears and his intellect seemed lengthened to stellar distances.

“That lad ain’t worth tuppence, he ain’t,” was Davy’s growl as he watched the infant mate



THE MOUTH OF WROXHAM BROAD

leisurely fingering the ropes. Grimes greeted this low commercial view of his marine abilities with a serene smile.

Davy meanwhile had steered our boat sharp to the right, and with a swift turn had sent us flying through a narrow opening. The river was left behind us, along with the bushes guarding the "gat-way," and we found ourselves entering a wide, open space of water. It was an inland lake, the glittering surface of which seemed overbrimming earth's shallow cup; for the shores were low, their level lines accentuating the breadth of the liquid acreage. The lake was Wroxham Broad.

In America, on Long Island, this pretty inlet would have seemed only a water-piece of fairly respectable area. Here, on the contrary, in this tight, compact little island, Wroxham Broad took on the proportions of a captive sea. To sail to the distant upper end was to undertake a voyage of formidable length; and doubtless, if one chose the spot with care, one might have the luck to run the chance of a drowning adventure. Wide and long was the stretch of water, and few and distant were the signs of man's habitation. The beauty of the Broad consisted in this remote and isolated aspect: it was a bit of wildness set in the finish of English

lawns. Beyond the screens of the trees yonder, there lay another world ; this wide lakelet seemed set apart as a home for wild birds and a refuge for the coyest fish. To one of us at least the moment had brought exhilaration in its train.

“Ha-ha-a ! This is sailin’, this is ! Grimes, my lad, get me my racin’ cap. You may tie your main-sail. No more miserable dodgin’s in and out between banks o’ daisies and willow-boughs.”

Now it was that the true mariner in Davy’s stanch sailor’s soul came to life ; eye and hand were as quick in response as an instrument to the touch of a master. The red of the racing-cap framed a face aglow with delight ; and it was impossible, I think, for a man to look more lovingly at a full sheet. A sharp turn of the tiller sent us skimming into the very middle of the Broad. The wind filled our sails, and we bore away with a sudden spurt and rush through the water that made the *Vacuna* show the speed that was in her. After the lazy creeping along the river, this flying before the wind was as exciting as a race. There was a most agreeable straining and creaking of cordage ; and the dip of the sails towards the water made one tingle, apprehensively : what if a foam-lipped wave should really break over our bows ? Barely had the question been asked when the *Vacuna*

dipped her nose in the water, and the yacht gave a genuine shudder, trembling in dead earnest from stem to stern. After that we gave full rein to our exulting spirit. We found ourselves presently engaged in two lively sailing-matches with a yacht twice our tonnage and a yawl-rigged boat of a saucy degree of courage. There was no lolling on cushions now : we stood to the ropes like born mariners. All our canvas was up in a jiffy, and we jibed, and “came about,” and lay flat on our decks, and were as wet as ducks. As for Davy, the sport was so entirely to his liking that he burst into song :

“Sailing on the ocean,
Sailing on the sea—a—

Seven years of it, sir, and then back to old Yarmouth. That’s right, my bird ! Go, fly, on with you, *Vacuna* !”

All the way to the end of the lake the contest lasted. Sometimes our rival yachtsmen on board the *Spirit* were almost alongside. A knot or two closer to the wind sped our gallant *Vacuna*, and away she swept, leaving the *Spirit* to look at the watery path we had trod. Past the low shores we flew as if on wings; the very waters seemed in joyous league with us, leaping and bounding in

buoyant lightness, parting as if of their own volition, as our bow cleaved through their sparkling wavelets.

In coming about, Davy's skill with the tiller decided the victory. We swung into the very eye of the wind in a jiffy, and were two good boats' lengths away before our defeated rival's sails were full. With a shout of triumph we swept onward, crossing the *Spirit's* bows in exultant derision.

Then we took time to look about us. Some fishermen sat in boats, far out in the middle of the lake, where the waves played a merry jig beneath the flat bottoms; others fished in their boats securely wedged between the tall reeds, as motionless as if in a trance. Not a head was lifted as we swept by: it was the creatures below the water, and not those above it, they were there to watch. Cows wandered down the low slopes of the banks, took a brief, comprehensive survey of the statue-like fishermen, and then staidly waded into the glistening water, to stand there, up to their knees in the cool of the lake, they, in turn, like unto so many graven figures, the measured blinking of their eyes alone proving them to be alive.

On the open spaces of the lake there was a mighty skidding about upon the waters. Boats

passed as swiftly as birds fly; two yachts were racing, every inch of canvas spread; a wherry was doing a wonderful stretch, sailing so close to the wind as no other boat could and live.

"This is a grand place for a wherry, sir. She has room to move round. An' as I was sayin', this is a grand piece of water, this is. She's rightly named the *Queen of the Broads*; there's none to match her." And Davy went on to explain that the shape of the Broad was peculiarly adapted for sailing, being oblong, with rounded corners.

"A wessel can sail right round it and back, with a jibe or two, an' no tackin' needed. An' you should see the water frolic on her when the regatta's on, an' all the banks as crowded with craft as a Yarmouth quay. That's a sight! Ah, but it's a grand sport, a Wroxham regatta!"

Of the crew and passengers of the *Vacuna*, Grimes alone had remained unmoved. During this hour of free, swift sailing he had sat an image of impassive serenity, with his hand on the ropes. His eyes were fixed on the more distant points. When the order was given to come about he awoke as if from a trance.

"That boy ain't no more a sailor than I be a corpse," was Davy's contemptuous growl.

"What is it, Grimes? What do you see?"

"Them's eels, ma'am, them is. He's a-skinning' of 'em. I likes eels," and in the eye of Grimes there was the hunger of the growing boy. Bread and jam from the nearest locker, it was suggested, might be made to suffice as a temporary substitute for eels.

On our next jibe we came about in a hurry, for a lively breeze was churning the lake into a little racing sea. As we scudded through the water, the figures on the shore seemed, by contrast, as immovable as statues. The skinner of the eels might have been an automaton. Farther on, there were yards and yards of the filmy lace of a fisherman's net hung on poles; through this net the landscape suddenly became idealised, just as a woman's features assume a more perfect unity through the harmonising meshes of a veil. Near by, a pale townsman was holding forth a fishing-rod with the rigid solemnity of the amateur. He had cautiously chosen a still and glassy surface. According to Davy, the spot was one backed by a reputation of past good "catches," and yet nothing was biting. As we swept by, Davy had his fling at the townsman's ignorance.

"Them tofts" ("toft" is Norfolk for "swell")
"comes down from the cities, an' thinks the flingin'

of a rod over a boat is the whole history of fishin'. Their empty catches ought to teach 'em, but they don't never l'arn anything."

The *Vacuna*, meanwhile, was making her very last trip up to the farther end of the Broad. The wind had strengthened, and our decks were wet once more, and so were we. But what mattered the dashing spray when one could feel the swift flight of the boat through the water; when the waves were still of a height to make the yacht dance; when our sails were stretched to their utmost limit, and the breeze was whipping the cheek till one's whole frame was aglow? The geese and ducks were doing their sailing closer in-shore. Overhead snipe, seagulls, and wood-pigeons beat the air with their wings, circling and swirling, and the sportsman among us was certain he had heard the whistle of a pheasant among the grasses.

Upon the hills the haystacks were beginning to cast a warning length of shadow. Davy took one glance at the sun and a ringing order to "come about" followed the glance. A skilful hand at the sheets and some practised steering sent us flying through the narrow "gat-way," and no fewer than three sails were near to do justice to the grace and dignity of our exit. Once upon the river, we were welcomed again by the quiet lapping of the water



SAILING ON THE BURE

along the fringe of rushes, the breeze was coming puffily, fitfully, and the banks seemed to close in about us. The trees were again our neighbours, and the soft eyes of the gentle cows looked out at us above the low bushes.



HORNING

CHAPTER VI

TO HORNING "STREET"

ONE is never satisfied. Here were we, leaning back on our cushions, lolling, with the satisfied ease of those who are back once more in the domestic arm-chair, after an agreeable experience on the high-road of adventure. The river laughed quietly up at us, like those ideal streams who smile and ask no questions. The afternoon lights were scattering gold right and left, and the trees were soaking up the molten sunshine, in a way bushy English trees, like fattened capitalists, have of absorbing light. Yet there was something we missed. It was the bending figures of French washer-women, beating their linen in floating tubs and wheelbarrows; it was the high, merry tones of voices, coming from open throats, mingling with the splashing of water; the gay nodding of heads—bound up in white cotton night-caps—heads that would most surely be raised as we

approached, greeting us with a cheery human heartiness, and that would have sent us forth on our way with a fortifying accent in their "Au revoirs!" Try to conceive of the mournfulness of a French river without the chorus of their floating laundries.

But this was England. And the Bure, being English, had a proper sense of decorum. We tried to picture these properly-brought-up farmers' wives doing their family washing in public, or going, half-dressed, to a river in broad noonday to chatter noisily, as they soused and rinsed their linen in the eyes of the world. As we rounded an orchard, a staid-featured woman with a boliver tied securely beneath her chin, and a neat apron, came out of her doorway to show us how a woman's petticoat should be hung out to dry, when one lives on a river as crowded as a high-road on Sunday. The starched skirt was spread decorously beneath the boughs; it was not hung. A nice distinction was made in the matter of men's shirts; a dozen or more were fluttering in the breeze on a slack line.

Although we had come back to sailing in a blue water-lane, there was much variety in the pictures made by the grouping of the fishermen's house-boats, the trees, and the low hills, the latter at just the right distance to make the sky appear

to come down like a curtain. It was as varied as any picture-gallery, and much better painted. Looking out at these unframed master-pieces was at once soothing and satisfactory ; one remained in no doubt whatever as to their meaning. A cow was an honest cow, yellow or white or dun, according as nature had painted her sleek hide, or at least, as the human eye has pretty unanimously agreed to see it. They were not violet cows, nor yet were they pink, nor a deep purple, nor did these cows' hairy coats thin out at the edges, and suddenly become merged into a tree-trunk or the roof of a house. These were just plain cows, as turned out by nature, innocent of all the guile of those Salon creatures, experienced in all manner of pictorial tricks. They were not, in a word, expecting to be hung on the line.

Across the meadows, the giant arms of a wind-mill could be seen, pawing the air. Another reach, and this picture gave way to one of more romantic aspect : a strip of water, separated from the river only by a band of tree-trunks, was covered with water-lilies ; it was gravely announced as another Broad—Little Salhouse Broad. It was a bed of lily-leaves. Close to its inlet two fishermen were bending over their rods with the fixed tension which

true passion for a sport brings to sinew and muscle. What to them was the loveliness of the gentle rising of the hillside behind them, or the massing of the greens in this Goose Island, with the yellow of the mustard-fields? Some snipe flew out of the reeds; a pheasant made a great stir among the bushes, heavily winging its low flight to the opposite shore; some water-hens were riding the stream; and, high up above, their glossy plumage shining against the blue of the sky-spaces, there circled and swirled a company of blackbirds. The fishermen might have been carved in stone; to this fluttering life they were as insensible as graven images. To feel a certain vibration at the end of their rods, the struggle of a captured creature, this would thrill them, and this alone. This Davy, with his knowledge of the art, could appreciate.

"Any luck?" he cried out, as he made an extra tack, sweeping us clear of their station.

"None whatever," came from the boat.

"The flood-tide'll be coming up shortly," our skipper shouted back encouragingly. "I like an earnest fisherman, I do, and one that takes his luck with a stout heart," was his further comment as we swept by.

From beyond a screen of trees ahead of us came

the scraping of a violin and the thin-stringed voice of a harp. Through the tree-trunks a large sheet of water lay glistening in the sun. The music, Davy explained, was from the *Belle of the Yare*, a steamer plying between Yarmouth and Wroxham. "An' there's an artist aboard of her as plays the violin in a way to make a man feel the power o' music, he does; but he can't fiddle as fast as he can tip the beer-glasses, he can't. That's his trouble, that is." And Davy looked pensive; the affliction of a reduced gentleman demanded at least the tribute of a fleeting sympathy. Our skipper was reminded of his own strength in the face of indulgence. "You may get me a glass, my boy. That sailin' on a Broad do bring a thirst to a man."

There were other sights and sounds rising up from about the river that provoked a thirst the polite world has agreed is one that maketh not ashamed. Had we not known the hour, we should soon have guessed it by various signs abroad on the river. A sailing-boat, lying-to under some willow-boughs, was having its deck turned into a temporary banqueting-table. Two girls in broad hats and loose blouses were pouring out tea for two curates. As we sailed past, London "At homes" were suddenly brought up before our eyes. The air was filled with the tones of

the clear English voices, and with certain questions and answers which seemed as much a part of English interiors as the wall-paper in their houses. "Do you take cream or lemon?" and, "The cake, please." "Thanks awfully; I don't mind if I do." A river-bend, a dash of shade, a boat and a well-spread tea-table,—where is the English maiden who, in India or the wilds of America, could not manage, with such surroundings, to set up a little temple of Home, with a hissing kettle as a form of incense?

"At Hornin', ma'am,—Hornin' Ferry," was the skipper's answer to an unuttered, but none the less expressive, question. And Grimes visibly brightened.

There was still a Broad or two to pass before the lapping of the water beneath our bow could be exchanged for the singing of a kettle. Hoveton Broad, like Salhouse Broad, shone through the trees, aglitter with the sparkle of shallow waters, on which the lily-leaves rose and fell in ceaseless motion. The river, between its banks of meadow-sweet and purple loosestrife, gallantly made an upward turning, as if to salute the pretty lakelet, and as quickly dropped away to the southward, to take broader sweeps and a fresh outlook over wide marshes. From one of the more desolate, wilder plains some hundreds of gray and white wings were

beating the air. Out of the medley of cries there came the unmistakable squeal of seagulls. The heavens were peopled with them; the marshes were alive with the tremor of their flight; and the river was flecked with the down of their feathers. Across our bows a troop of youthful swimmers were taking a trial trip, and our masthead moved amid the mass of fluttering wings. Davy was making the most of the moment.

"It's the close season now, sir; the gulls spends their summers here along with their young. It's fine feedin' they gets on the reeds, and the marshes is what the young ones need. There's thousands of 'em every year at Ranworth Broad."

The swirling and circling of the big white wings had hardly ceased to darken the sky when a cluster of red roofs told of man's habitation. Rows of straggling houses, a windmill set on a low hill, a series of gardens brimming over with larkspurs and hollyhocks running parallel with the river,—if anything could make one feel at home in Horning, it was the pretty ways and graces with which it came down to the very edge of the river to meet one.

A row of children suddenly filled the river front. They seemed to come forth, as if at a preconcerted signal, through the low doorways and over the



THE VILLAGE OF HORNING

narrow doorsteps of the Horning cottages. Without further delay, they burst into a song. They were in excellent practice, for the words of the song were made quite clear.

“Ho, John Barleycorn!
Ho, John Barleycorn!
All day long I raise my song
To old John Barleycorn.”

When the song was done, some twenty-four childish eyes were fixed on the strangers in the boat.

“They always sings; Hornin’s famed for that. Two hundred years, they say, the children o’ Hornin’ have sung to the passin’ boats. But it’s the yachts that they makes their money off of,” was Davy’s unblushing introduction of the waiting choir. Something of the youth and freshness of those clear, high voices, that only a moment ago had mingled so agreeably with the pinks and the rose-scents in the homely, old-fashioned gardens, had gone. The children, after pocketing their pennies, turned unnaturally incurious backs on us and the river. They had learned already, apparently, to take a strictly professional view of the world as it passed.

“Let down your jib! Let her go! An’ do it tidy,—don’t want no blunderin’!” Davy was shouting out. For the eye of the world was upon him.

Some yachts, lugger-rigged boats, and several wherries, some open sheds, two low thatched houses, and a group of rustics—such was the world we had come upon, two miles farther on, as we rounded the tree-boughs. Just below the thatched houses Davy brought the yacht round with a swing.

“Is your anchor ready? Is it ready, I say?” he was shouting again, as he flung himself against the tiller, heading the yacht bow on to the meadows. Grimes answered the shout by a spring overboard into the grasses; another second, and he had buried the anchor in a mound of daisies. And thus it was that we made our first port; for this was Horning Ferry. When Davy, with imperturbable gravity, had placed the two-foot gang-plank between the deck and the daisy-patch, his mariner’s eye had a gleam of triumph in its twinkle. Communication with the shore had been safely accomplished.

Our arrival, meanwhile, was making a mild stir along the shore. The life and movement among the boats and on the river-banks, recalled the animation we thought had been left behind at Wroxham. On the decks of the boats there was much moving about; people were getting into jolly-boats, or were already amid-stream, rowing across to the inn. Two Cambridge boys came out of their cabin, scarfs

in hand, to get a good look at the latest arrivals. Beyond the inn, moored to the right-hand bank, one of the two wherries had the look of a friend. A girl was seated on the cabin-deck, on a mound of pillows. A group of men were gathered about her, serving her from a tea-tray, as they might a child or queen. Her gurgling, girlish laughter came across the water, filling the air with its mirthful music. Then it stopped suddenly. The girl had started up, scattering the group to right and left, as she sprang astern. The flutter of her handkerchief was waved, as in triumph ; and it was waved at us.

"It's the lady of Cross's wherry," cried Davy exultingly. Some one else besides the lady was sending us a greeting. A gentleman in knickerbockers and the huge *béret* of the Normandy coast was waving the same with the grotesque exaggeration of welcome. Our unknown friend's features were not recognisable. Our doubt and perplexity were the source of much hilarity on Cross's wherry. The gentleman of the *béret* turned to the party of cruisers, and made them, as was obvious from his attitude and gestures, a bit of a speech, of which we were plainly the subject. The discourse was greeted with shouts of laughter and applause at its close. The orator was led in mock triumph to Miss Belmore's

seat upon the cushions, and he was given tea by the lady of the wherry, as if he had been a hero receiving his reward.

Now, all this whetted our curiosity mightily. But we philosophically threw out crumbs of comfort : at best, it was only two hours' time till dinner.

Meanwhile a bit of comedy was going on nearer home. After the ropes were coiled, Grimes had swung himself down the forward hatchway. When he emerged he carried a face as burnished as a shining berry ; his blonde locks had been freshly greased ; and a cerulean necktie, sailor-knotted, rivalled his blue eyes, bluer than the river. Now, whatever Grimes did, as we had known from the first, was always wrong in the skipper's eyes. For a fairly genial nature, with no deposit of bitterness in his soul, I have never known a more relentless persecutor than Davy. Grimes seemed to rouse his sleeping devils. When the lad crossed the deck, Davy gave a loud shout. He clapped his hands on his knees, as if in an ecstasy of delight.

"My eye! Ain't he a bloomin' toft! I say, Grimes, my darlin', tell us where you are goin' with your Sunday beauties."

"I'm goin' ter see ma brother," growled Grimes, thrusting two angry fists into two deep pockets. To

the growl succeeded a vindictive whistling, and he swung his young strength across the gang-plank, to gain, with a bound, the tow-path on the river-bank. He was soon boarding a dingy-looking wherry. A heavily-bearded man lifted his head from the dry bottom of the boat, nodded gravely, and returned to shovelling his cargo into a wheel-barrow alongside. Still whistling, Grimes went aft. Another younger Grimes bounded out of the low cabin, and the two lads' heads were, for a moment, close together. A moment later Grimes major was seated on the deck railing, with an accordion on his lap, and the inharmonious strains of the "Jenny Lind Polka" were drowning all other sounds.

"Now he's happy, he is," laconically remarked Davy, as he lifted his eyes from the ropes coiled at his feet. "That's what his fingers is fitted for—a-playin' on a concertina. He's just made for a circus company, he is. An' that's his father. He's bringin' up stones from Norwich for that 'ere new house, an' he's a workin' man, he is."

The grinding scrape of the shovel went in and out among the stones, while the broad shoulders bending over them told the years of the old man's toil; and the Jenny Lind Polka was played with increasing zest. It was wrong, I admit, but my

sympathies went out to that lad fingering his squeaking instrument. Even Deity has seen the advisability of not making us all after the same pattern. If Grimes had that touch of poetry in him which prompted him to make a toilet before playing the homely instrument which made him one of Apollo's rustic band, was the poetic germ within to wither and decay because his father's talent lay in a shovelling of stones? As I read the signs of the times, the real evil lies, not in the doing of certain things, but in doing those things when they bring no financial return. And I grant you, from this strictly commercial point of view, it was quite wicked of Grimes to be playing a polka when he should, like a good little boy, have been helping his father shovel his cargo ashore. But the Grimes family appeared to be quite equal to managing their own affairs. The father, obviously, believed in the fine Republican dogma of "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité," and he practised his creed, which even those who emigrate to the country where democracy is an industry, sometimes lamentably fail to do. For a good hour he shovelled, without even so much as a reproach in his glance; and his two sons requited his toil with a giddy schottische and a waltz or two. Such was the wherryman's perverted view of parental duty, that we caught

him nodding his head, keeping time to the rhythm of the crude music.

Davy's voice came up to us presently. He was standing alongside ; he had brought the jolly-boat round. " You'll be better ashore, sir. You'll have a chance to stretch your legs in the inn yonder. An' will you have the tea aboard or at the inn ? "

That was a grave matter ; we would decide as we crossed the river. As we stepped into the row-boat, a grinding noise, as of ropes working over rusty iron, attracted our attention. A raft was being ferried across the stream. On the raft was a particularly smart-looking trap ; a groom was standing at the horse's head, and a girl was on the box-seat, her perfection of attire recalling the Bond Street tailors. The rustics gathered around the ferry-landing watched the approaching equipage with slow, dull gaze. There was no lighting of the eyes as the spirited horse, startled at the sudden shock of the raft's bumping against the wooden stage, reared, carrying the groom with him into mid-air. But the girl-driver laid a firm whip on her steed, and in a trice had him well in hand, and was speeding merrily along up the hill to the left of the inn.

The little inn was as modest a tavern as had ever set itself up in the business. It boasted the trimmest of

gardens, the neatest of barmaids, the most irreproachably bare sitting-rooms. Both the inn and the garden were crowded with boats' crews. The lawn was as gay as a garden party. Toward one of the smaller, inner rooms we went in search of a table; but a certain well-known deity of cherubic proportions was there before us. A boy with a dawning beard, and wearing the Cambridge colours about his hat, was bending over a rosy-lipped barmaid; he was making her hand, enclosed within his own, write his name in the visitors' book. With only a couple of dead fishes in the room, stuffed and well out of the way in their glass cases along the wall, an effective retreat was the only chance left us of proving ourselves as discreet as the pike.

In the garden, a bench beneath a group of willows lured us to look out upon the river from the green banks. We bent our steps thither in all innocence. In all innocence, a man and a maid had made of this shady arbour a corner of the Garden of Eden; the girl's hand was laid in the man's strong palm; and no Eve could have been more indifferent to the presence of a few yachts, more or less, anchored along the rivers of Paradise, with their decks swarming with people, than was this English maiden oblivious of the pleasure-fleet opposite.

As the shore seemed to be a bit crowded, as it were, with such a number of lovers on the stage at once, we made good our second exit. One of us from the shore had seen a church-spire. A walk along the road would be better than struggling for a seat in a stuffy inn-parlour. We were soon out upon the hillside. Cupid had made better time than we : he was already holding high carnival under the trees. The girl in the dog-cart we had seen ferried across now had seated beside her a man in golfing rig ; they had dropped the groom, and the man had his scarlet-coated arm about the girl's slim waist. After that we gave in ; this trying to dodge lovers was a pure waste of time. I think I never knew so small an inn, so minute a garden, and so short a country road, so infested with lovers as those at Horning Ferry.

Once fairly out on the road, the perfume of the woodbine in the hedges seemed of a superfine essence of sweetness. All the earth-scents were doubly good to breathe after the salt in the air along the river marshes. The road behind the inn-stables took us between fields of blonde oats and the bridally attired buckwheat. The hedges were full of hawthorn and sweetbrier ; and the blackbirds, the thrushes, and the twittering wrens made the wild seafaring notes of

the gulls of half an hour ago seem as far away as the sea itself. Over the tree-tops and through the boughs the river appeared a series of radiant lakes and ponds in which the shores were reflecting their tranquil loveliness. Everywhere, far as the eye could reach, the winged sails were gliding, flying, leaning stately to the wind, or were at rest, their whites and rich browns as much a part of the river nature as the willows of the flowery banks.

Horning Church and its only near neighbour, the schoolhouse, sat on the top of the hill. As lovers of progress, the latter, bristling with proofs of all the latest modern grammar-school improvements, ought to have moved us, at least, to a respectful show of interest. We gave it a passing glance, incontinently turning our backs on its too obvious, aggressive newness. Educational buildings, in truth, have always bored me uncommonly, their general aspect and character bearing too close a likeness to certain pedantic ladies and priggish clericals, who go through life with an uplifted, corrective forefinger. We are not always in a mood to be told how little we know, and this is what institutions of learning and the pedants are under vows to prove to us, both in season and out. But a church,—there's a discreet

teacher for you, if ever there was one. That uplifted finger, raised skyward, has no self-complacency in its gesture, although there's no preacher so eloquent as a church-spire, if you happen to be in a mood for a sermon ; but the finest spire in the world will be as mute as the dead if you walk up to it in a rebellious spirit.

Never did I chance on a church less assertively aggressive than this St. Benedict's of Horning. It rose from the midst of its green walls, and from among the mounds raised over what was once breathing men and women, with an air of stately repose, carrying one back to a forgotten era of ecclesiastical calm. Architecturally, it was not of the well-known Norfolk pattern. Its tower was square, and not of the rounded style so common in this county of churches. The early builders in flint soon found their unyielding material fitting the more easily into circular forms. Norfolk is full of those round towers, with their bits of mosaic decoration. St. Benedict's square tower, therefore, that would have been no novelty elsewhere, was here a rare departure.

A man must have a hearty fit of repentance upon him, for even a fine church and a lonely churchyard to be more to his taste than a gay river-bank.

But the shore, when we reached it, was almost as quiet as the hilltop. Not more than a half-dozen yachts were still at their moorings. The inn itself was as still as a deserted village. Grimes across the river was signalling the welcome news that tea was awaiting us.

“Why doesn’t he bring the jolly-boat round? Darn his coolness!” was Davy’s smothered ejaculation as he emerged from the inn’s low tap-room to escort us aboard of our boat. Luckily, the ferry was on the point of making a trip across. To go a-ferrying was very much to our liking, as we assured our angry skipper. But he refused to lessen the burden of his anger. He carried it across the river with him, in undiminished volume. A farmer and some pigs made the crossing with us. The pigs proved themselves experienced travellers; they took to the ferry as they might to their own trough.

On boarding the yacht, we found the table set for tea. The cake and jam were flanked by huge bunches of wild flowers; perhaps the concert of blackbirds in the bushes, and the flutter of the butterflies among the blue corn-flowers gave to the little feast an extra flavour. It is only on a yachting cruise on the Broads that one can always be sure of a

flower-garden and an open-air orchestra as an everyday accompaniment to one's tea.

"We shan't be able to get that boy down the hatchway. He's takin' in his winter provisions, he is," was Davy's last growl, as we went below.



HORNING FERRY INN

CHAPTER VII

A LITTLE DINNER AT THE FERRY

THERE may be an agreeable novelty in going to a dinner in a jolly-boat ; but as a conveyance an open boat is, to say the least, somewhat revealing. To crowned heads, publicity and the privacy of the closet are all one, we are told ; but to humble mortals, with no previous training to such a kingly indifference, the searching thoroughness of the public gaze may be felt to the very marrow. As we crossed the river we were made conscious of a goodly audience gathered along the river-bank. I, for one, felt we were worth looking at ; but to the company of rustics grouped about the ferry wharf, and to the Cambridge boys, who were leaning over each other's shoulders, our appearance seemed to be no more impressive than would have been that of a circus. We could even hear the outspoken comments, as doubtless the lady riders do, when somersaulting in

mid-air. "They do look smart, don't they?" The praise brought no quickening of the pulse. We liked better the unfeeling chorus of the ducks and geese, the flapping of whose wings on the water sprinkled a showery spray over our finery. They valiantly disputed precedence, being also on their way to dinner, *viâ* the grasses up to the barnyard yonder.

The star of our popularity was soon quenched. The sides of our boat had barely grazed the shore's wooden wharf when a face showed itself at the little inn parlour. It was as quickly withdrawn. To the soft cry, "It is they," succeeded the rustle of skirts. The next instant Miss Belmore was crossing the greensward. The picture she made, as she stood waiting for us to alight, was not one to be forgotten. Whence this perfection of finish the English maiden has discovered in the matter of sporting attire? With all her cleverness, the Frenchwoman has never successfully captured the secret. Whenever she attempts to costume the part of a sporting lady, Galicia's irresistible daughter is laughed off the scene.

Violet Belmore, of all women, with the pink and snow of her skin, the gold laced in her hair, and the ripened lines of a figure in which the maiden and the dawning woman seemed contending for mastery,

might well have hesitated before encasing such loveliness in the severe cut of a tailor-made boating costume. But the delicacy of her colouring was accentuated by the firm lines of her shapely flannels.

"How good of you to come! We have only just come over," her soft voice cried out to us. "And—there is a surprise awaiting you," she added, smiling.

"The gentleman of the *béret*?" I asked, as we leapt ashore.

"The very same," and she laughed with the glee of a happy child. "Come, I must introduce you to my friends."

When we met together in the little inn parlour there were six of us. Miss Belmore had brought her aunt, Lady Marten, a lady whose dawning fifties were appropriately framed in frosty curls; there was an agreeable London diner-out, Sir Reginald Camdon, whose flannel shirt and duck trousers were worn with the air of their being full evening dress; and there was also the gentleman of the *béret*. This individual was held over, so to speak, until the greetings and presentations were at an end. Miss Belmore's smile was then edged with mystery; and the others looked sympathetically secretive. Presently the surprise walked in. It was costumed in a suit of flannels

familiar to us, as was the Vandyke beard we had known and loved these many years. It was none other than our old friend Renard, whom we had left only two months since, as we thought, securely anchored in his Paris studio. There are certain men and women whom to meet anywhere, say at the apex of the North Pole or on the outer edge of the Equator, would divest any surroundings of strangeness; whose personality, indeed, is of that potential quality which makes time, place, and the occasion sink into mere background; whose presence fills the whole scene, holding the stage, so to speak, until their very last moment of exit. Renard was one of these unique individuals. Presently this narrow inn parlour might have been a log hut or the palace of a king, for all the effect such unusual surroundings would then have had upon us; he would be showing us a trick or two, with the magic of his speech, that would make Horning Ferry as unimportant as is any scenic setting to the true magician. Of all men, or even women, whom we might have chosen as an ideal sort of person to meet on the Broads, Renard would easily have been first choice. One fine day, it appears, into his studio had walked Miss Belmore and her aunt, and the picture of the year was abandoned as incontinently as are other

things, by geniuses, as well as by more commonplace folk, when something turns up to make desertion worth while.

"The figure wouldn't take the right spring. I'd worked and worked. Once you begin niggling it's all up with you. So when Miss Vi said, 'Why not come with us?' I echoed, 'Why not?' And here I am. When I get back, shan't I paint, though? What an air blows over these marshes, hey?"

"Well, and what do you think of the Broads?"

"Most wonderful country I ever saw in my life!"

Then we laughed. It was Renard's characteristic answer. England, France, Normandy, the East,—to Renard every new country was the most beautiful his artist's eye had ever lighted on. He had the true painter's talent of obliteration: his mind was a palimpsest; every fresh writing destroyed the traces of former impressions.

"Mr. Renard has promised to paint me a Broads picture," said Miss Belmore, with an accent of light mockery in her voice.

"One? Miss Vi, I shall paint you a dozen. I wouldn't give a fig for a man who didn't paint two a day in such a country. Most paintable country I ever saw! I'll take some more soup, please. Wonderful soup, that."

The ripple of laughter that greeted Renard's outburst set the pace of the evening's gaiety. How, indeed, could any dinner fail to be gay, under the circumstances? Flannels and boating costumes are fine breakers-down of conventional barriers, and small rooms and chance meetings great breeders of cosy intimacies. We leave, I sometimes think, the very best impression of ourselves in the keeping of those we may never see again. And surely it is a fine tribute we unconsciously pay to our unconquerable belief in human nature, that we rarely repent the capital of frankness we invest in a stranger. What conversations are more eagerly remembered than those never to be repeated? And what other intercourse seems as thrilled with sympathetic quivering as that born of those quick-breeding friendships which, like the butterfly, their true prototype, have but the life of a day?

Had the company been even less to our liking, the hours could hardly have failed to pass merrily. The little room, bare as it was, had yet a peaceful, homelike air. In an English inn one is certain to stumble on reminders of some one's better days. There is always a fine piece of old furniture or silver, or bits of old china, to tell you as plainly as possible that one or two, or maybe three centuries ago the

inn had had money in its deep cabinet pockets, and had been owned by one who held his head up among the best. Under the Horning Ferry Inn's thatched roof, four Georgian silver candlesticks stood proudly erect, to give you the above information. In a deep Delft bowl there were some country flowers, arranged, in the matter of grouping, as a young lady from Chicago once informed me she was studying Shakespeare, "according to the passions"; there were deep reds and as deep purples, yellow sultans, carnations, and the blues of cornflowers, set close, with a fine Chinese disregard of gradation. The night air blew in through the casements, and made a pleasant coolness; in the pauses of our talk, few and far between, the yachts' crews' rough voices in the outer tap-room made the perfect stillness of the elements the more marked; and the slow, heavy footsteps of the rustic waitresses, as they came and went over the bare unpainted floors, were a reminder of the distance of that world from which we had fled.

At first the talk was general. Sir Reginald told some amusing adventure he had had years ago, before any but the trading wherries stepped the narrow rivers. Lady Marten added some early Norwegian experiences, when an English yacht in northern seas was as great an event as Spanish ships

in the Mexican Gulf two hundred years ago. Miss Belmore, as a hostess, did more smiling than talking. In the end, long before dessert was served, it came about, as usual, that it was Renard who was doing all the talking. When genius can talk, conversation, sooner or later, is certain to end in monologue. Renard was the least tiresome and the most genial of monologists. Until he had the floor to himself, indeed, nothing in his sporadic sentences suggested his conversational talents. He was one of those talkers whom the right audience intoxicates, to whom mere words, and a continuous traffic in them, bring a wondrous quickening, the fires of his intellect bursting into fine flame, if the mood was upon him and the company to his liking. The company, on this night, was of the firing sort. The lovely face of Violet Belmore was bent towards him like a flower swayed by a strong wind; Lady Marten's speaking countenance was aflame with interest; and Sir Reginald's usually impassive features were stirred to an unwonted expressiveness.

Renard, now and then, would break in upon his monologue to say, "Miss Vi, would you mind sitting this side, just away from that muddy panel? It kills your hair. Thank you." Or it would be, "How beautiful is this candlelight! See what poetry

there may be in four puny candles. We are as beautiful as angels with all our outlines softened—we are as gloriously lighted as a Rembrandt. Electricity is brutal, as brutal as a tender conscience, and as remorseless. It reveals everything—the sin of wrinkles, those ghosts of our past; the crime of a bad complexion, and the hideous vices of ugliness. Did you ever look at a *table d'hôte* under a full electric light? Don't, if you wish to preserve your last illusion about a woman or about man's moral grandeur. You are still, Miss Vi, a most beautiful illusion; don't move."

"All owing to a pink shade and a candle!" cried Miss Belmore, with her soft laugh.

"No; you would be beautiful even under an electric light," said Renard, with that candour which robs flattery of its sycophancy. "But if you are wise, you will take a hint from the ancients; you will refuse to be lighted by anything except candles. Isis wore a veil, you remember. Even beauty gains by the softening light of an illusion."

"Modern woman doesn't believe in illusions, you know."

"Thank Heaven, I shan't live long enough to see what a mess she will make of things, generally, without them," was Renard's irreverent answer.

“Illusions ! the whole fabric of life rests on the belief in things that aren’t true. We are all poets, dreamers, mystics. Even we Americans, who are called materialists, whose chief reproach is too great a development of hard, practical common-sense—well, we are a nation of dreamers. Aren’t we the great speculators of the world ; and what is speculation but a form of dreaming ? Two-thirds of the American people spend their time in dreaming dreams—that don’t come true—and those people are happy. The other third is miserable ; their speculations are realised, and Othello’s occupation’s gone. A touch more, a flight beyond the practical, into the sphere of the imagination, into the pure realm, and we Americans would be the leading dreamers of the world. When we stop dreaming about lands and stocks and railroad shares, we’ll show this old Europe a thing or two. Wait till our inventors take to painting, to writing poetry, to the writing of books ! Think of an Edison as a poet, a Jay Gould following Balzac’s trade, or——”

“Our Tammany leaders turned into the Forty Immortals !”

But Renard was in no temper to feel the sting of ridicule. His talking blood was up, and I doubt if he even heard the light laughter of our derision. He

was far afield once more, before the merry chorus was done. He had risen, had walked towards the low inn door, and was now seated, waving his hand toward the casement. Some new thought had struck him, and he plunged into it *medias res*. This was a favourite trick of his,—to start a topic, half develop the idea, finishing it conclusively in his own mind, and then present his listeners to an entirely new theme, without the usual coupling of conversational links. It was the impressionistic method applied to thinking aloud.

“The river,—one feels a kind of night out there, beyond the window, without seeing it. One can fancy the pool in which the stars are quivering, splitting, rising, drowning. All the tragedy of darkness is going on there. One needn’t look out upon it to feel it. We ought to see in that way—to see with the drunkard’s eye, to feel with the blind man’s keenness of touch. If our senses weren’t so dulled by the fact that beauty is so cheap, to be had for the looking, why, life would be one long enchantment, a ravishing vision. That’s all the artist does; he plays beauty is a new thing, and then goes and gets drunk on it. He says to himself, ‘Heaven is here, right around us, everywhere’; and then he shuts his eyes and paints it like mad, if he happens to have

genius bound up in his dull hide. Why, otherwise, should men go in for art? It's because they're mad. Art is a kind of sane insanity, a madness the world has agreed to treat with respect." Renard paused, a brief moment, crumbling his bread; and then he broke out again, with a fresh zest. "What a penalty genius pays for seeing, though! Those poor mortals who can spy out bits of the heaven around us, how they pay for their gift of second sight! They spend days in hell. Talent is happier; it's the near-sightedness of genius, I often think. It doesn't see keenly enough nor deep enough to get down to the awfulness, the abysmal verities. It hovers on the brink of the dread precipice, plays with the flowers growing there,—and reproduces them, in wax! Half the time, the effigy goes. In a world of humbug, imitation is good enough. As not one man in a million uses his eyes, how are men to know the real thing, even if they're given it? In point of fact, genius, as a rule, has to wait for its introduction to the world until some other genius comes along. The big reputations are all made by a clique, by some of the intellectual giants who are tall enough to see over the heads of the dullards, and discern genius shivering in a corner. Was it the mob, the people, I should like to know, or Lorenzo, the clever

millionaire, who believed in Michael Angelo's genius, pushed him, gave him his chance? It's the same thing now. It's tiresome, the way we poor monkeys go on doing the same apish tricks, making the same dull errors, century after century. There's Millet, now. There didn't happen to be a French Lorenzo or Francis I. about in his day; and so, because he saw a bit of old beauty, as old as the dawn and the twilight he painted—but painted in a new way—he was left to starve in a French hamlet."

"Yet, what a fuss Paris makes over a 'new' man!"

"Yes, when he has arrived. Even then, their enthusiasm's worth having. I saw a man once, the great S——, get his crown; and it was something to make the heart thump."

"Oh, tell us!" cried Violet, her eyes aglow.

"Well, it was a Champs de Mars Varnishing Day. S—— had a great show—nine big canvases—all in a row; some of them masterpieces. One or two will be in the Luxembourg, on their way to the Louvre; and in a hundred years or so they'll make some of the old fellows there look a trifle rusty. Well, S—— walked into the restaurant at noon. Every one was there now as, an hour before, this 'tout Paris' had been at the Salon. Every table had its

celebrity, its professional beauty, its wit or actor ; actresses were as plentiful as the waiters. Now a restaurant isn't a Greek temple exactly, nor is it the steps of Rome's capitol. Sophocles or Phidias or Corinne would hardly have gone to the cafés of their day in search of an ovation ; but in our day any place will serve, provided there are people enough, of the right sort. The greatest ovation I ever saw was given to a live man, wonderfully clever,—we mortals usually giving our best praise to a man when he's dead, a prevision against the spread of conceit, I suppose. Well, in Nîmes, at the big amphitheatre, at a bull-fight, when Mistral came in—But that'll keep."

"Oh, pray go on ! I do so dote on gory tales. Tell us about the bull-fight," purred Lady Marten, eagerly. Gentlewomen often have this keenness of appetite for a supping on horrors, I have noticed. But Renard would not spread the feast for the lady, on this occasion, at least.

"It's too long. Wait for a moonlight night. I'll do it when I can be sure of a nightingale's chorus. As I was saying, my friend S——"

"So the great man was a friend of yours ? "

"Oh yes ; always keep one great man on tap. It teaches one humility, to strut beside a mountain.

And now, am I to go on with this story or not?"

And he went on, then. "S—— came into that restaurant not looking for anything more lofty than a chair to sit upon. But his fellow-artists caught sight of him. They rose to him, as one man; the mob followed suit. In an instant a thousand tongues were loosened. Huzzas rose, caps went up, glasses clicked; and a shout, a yell, rent the air when Sara, as he passed her, threw him a wreath of laurel that lay in her own lap. He was terribly moved, —who wouldn't have been? But he made her a king's bow. With his head in the air, and his face working, pale as a corpse, and visibly trembling—those Frenchmen are willing to show their emotions, like women—he walked down to his table between a chorus of such shouts as few emperors have been able to command, even when the shouting's paid for."

"We do things more quietly over here; but a man gets his reward all the same," said Sir Reginald, with no protest in his tone. But he was an Englishman, and he had the Englishman's aversion to French ways.

"Yes, if he's big enough, he may hope to be knighted; his wife may walk down to dinner before the squire's lady. But there's no shouting; and as

we artists are madmen, remember, we like a noise, you see. I'm afraid we'll have to concede that Paris is the only place left where art and artists are treated in the grand old Greek way. They understand us, as they do women. They don't insist on our being like the rest of the world ; they make allowances for madmen. Ha ! ha ! we *are* mad—as mad as Hamlet ; and the madness is of the same sort. It's a species of divine self-hallucination. What, coffee—already ? Let's have it out under the stars. What do you say, Lady Marten ? ”

“ Am I to have my bull-fight story ? ” playfully asked Lady Marten, as she led the way towards the dark bit of greensward.

We left the candles blinking in their sockets in the old candlesticks. The inn-waitress blinked even more sleepily as she followed us out into the night. Under the trees there were a million stars to replace the burnt-out candles. The river was full of starry points, that broke into brilliant fragments, as the ripples quivered like a delicate shudder across the liquid surface.

Renard's talk flowed on. It was still as scintillating as were the lights that started up from the river's blackness. But by degrees his monologue was merged into a *tête-à-tête*. He lured Miss

Belmore out towards the bank ;—an effect of light on the water was to be seen and shown. It was no hardship, we found, to do some talking on our own account. We liked the surroundings, also, uncommonly : so near to the fields that we seemed a part of the sleeping life among the grasses ; some cattle, breathing heavily, not a stone's throw away ; the sweetness of lately mown meadows mingling with the thick scent of flowers blooming round us ; not a sound save the quiet lapping of the water ; the yachts dimly outlined along the bank, shrouded with their tent-like awnings ; and for torches to light us, later, across the stream to our boat, the eyes of the stars, and the deep reds and greens of the yachts' lanterns reflecting their liquid flames from shore to shore.

It was long past midnight when the sound of shipping oars told us our friends had reached their own wherry. A final "Good night !" floated over the water. As we crept in under our close awning, a whip-poor-will's sad note asked reproachfully what revellers were disturbing the night's stillness.

CHAPTER VIII

TO POTTER HEIGHAM

WHEN we came on deck the next morning, the day, the river, and the country had that about them which provoked resentment. Not one of them was as it should have been. We had counted on finding the day younger: we had made an engagement with the dawn. With Miss Belmore and Renard we were to eat breakfast by the light of a rising sun. Now, as we looked forth at the day, it was to confront one whose work was half done. Here was a shadowless earth, with hot noon lights on the shimmering fields; the river was ablaze as the blue vault above; and the sun was shining away in the zenith. We were as angry as people have a right to be who have no one to blame but themselves. A little reflection brought us to the second stage, to the agreeable period, of this order of resentment; for our next discovery was a revelation.

We had been tricked. Our impotent anger might now assume the dignity of a righteous wrath.

We were moored to a strange bank; the ferry was nowhere to be seen; the thatched roofs of the inn were undiscernible; the earth about us, in a word, was a new earth, and not a boat was in sight. Some one had sailed the *Vacuna* onwards. The guilty party would not be hard to find. I, for one, cooled sufficiently to wonder just how the skipper would take his punishment. When one is handling a humourist, the laugh is not always so sure to be on one side.

Davy and Grimes loomed out of the hatchway. Their smiling, as they bobbed their heads, was belied by a sneaking look of fear. Both seemed to cling to their stronghold. Whatever else was to come, this moment of peril had made friends of sworn enemies: our crew was now a united crew confronting a common danger. For one long moment they eyed us, dodging our return glance; then Davy pulled himself and his courage up, and sprang through the hatchway. As he came forward, he carried his apprehension off with fine bravado.

“Well, sir, good mornin’, an’ the same to you, madam. You’ve rested fine. There’s nothin’ like the Broads for sleepin’ an’——”

"Davy, where are we anchored?" he was asked severely.

"Well, sir, as you an' your lady was a-restin' so fine, we thought we'd take a bit of a sail. It's Hornin' Hall, sir. We're anchored for breakfast."

"And where is Horning Hall?"

"Two miles below the Ferry. It's yonder farmhouse."

"And the wherry, where is that?"

"Cross's wherry? They'll be slippin' away to Potter Heigham by this time."

Slipping away to Potter Heigham! That announcement was greeted with proper spirit. Our skipper took his moral beating as an ex-British mariner should. As a seaman experienced in applied discipline, he wriggled painfully, as if in inward pain, and the humourist in him helped him as little as fair-weather friends are known to come to one's rescue in critical moments. Only once did he venture to enter a protest. It was when the contrasting picture to his insubordination was presented, —that of Cross's obedience to orders, and, in consequence, his party's breakfasting on board, as the sun rose.

"But, sir, Cross, he did as I did, sir. His party was as snug as mice, fast asleep in their bunks. He

just hoisted sail and slipped away on his course. Yes, sir ; he's up to Heigham Bridge by this time, an' that's a fact. But we needed butter an' eggs, an' the farm has the best on the river, so I anchored here. Cross is to meet us at the Bridge at Potter Heigham, if the wind holds, sir."

At that our spirits rose with a spurt. It might have been much worse. If our friends had been up and abroad, fluttering their vigour on deck and flinging their jeers in our senseless ears, our philosophy would, indeed, have been strained. Their swinish slumber made our own seem a reasonable, if not a laudable indulgence. It is competition alone, I am persuaded, that makes early rising a virtue.

The beauty of the morning was such that to continue to confront it with bad temper would have been difficult, even for those who pride themselves on bringing gloom to breakfast. The light glimmered on sun-shot leaves, and the leaping ripples were in step with the popular dance movement of grasses and boughs. There was just enough warmth in the air to make the light breeze seem an indulgence rained straight from heaven. Out yonder, beyond the banks, lay a misty plain, where herds of cattle were moving their mottled hides across the verdant fields. We

agreed that, indeed, it might have been much worse.

Shortly after breakfast Davy's voice came up from the river level. He was holding the *Pride of the Broads* alongside.

"I'm goin' for milk an' eggs, ma'am, up to the Hall. Perhaps it'd be your pleasure to take the trip up the dyke." His voice had a new note in it, not altogether displeasing; it was an accent of timidity.

Now, as it chanced, to row up a dyke had been one of the ungratified desires of the trip. Through the tall grasses the river would run up into moist places where the shrubs and reeds made a mass of soft verdure; a house-boat was sometimes anchored in these grassy "pulks"; or a fenman's cottage would make a finish, pictorially, in the perspective. From such low, open doors would come the rhythmic rocking of cradles, and above the cradle a young face, flushed with the new wine of maternity, would look out, with calm, satisfied eyes, to see the outer world as it passed, happy to watch it, since her world lay beside her, and she was singing to it. Fishermen's huts were built along these dykes, nets were mended and hung on the bushes to dry; and the young pheasants, as they winged their low flight, could be

heard whirring in among the rushes. A trip up a dyke was therefore exactly to our taste. One or two skilful strokes of Davy's oars sent us skimming from the brilliantly lighted river surface to the quiet of a placid creek; it was like turning from a busy high-road into a lane. The green waterway seemed to have captured the secret of perpetual twilight, the day finding its way only through a dense arch woven by the osiers and willow-boughs. Through the glistening tree-trunks the fair façade of a stout, substantial ivy-mantled mansion confronted us. It was Horning Hall. Close to the farm, leaning over a rustic gate, was a girlish shape. It was a traditional pose in which to discover feminine rusticity; but the living loveliness of the girl's fair face, and the soft, animal wonder in her hazel eyes, made one oblivious of all other less genuine models. "Is it milk or cream?" was her strictly professional question. "It's milk, my lass, an' eggs if you've got 'em fresh." Davy was obviously entirely at his ease with the rustic divinity. With a long, sailor-like lurch he took his place beside the girl, leaving us to follow. "An' the guv'nor, how is he? An' your aunt an' the stock?" we heard him say as the two bent their steps toward the back of the farmhouse. The maiden stood for a moment as she opened the



A FARM IN THE BROADS

gate for us, and gave us a dip of a courtesy as we passed beyond the stile. "I'll go for the milk, ma'am," she said, in a voice that was as liquid as her eyes. A moment later, and she had crossed the courtyard.

Meanwhile Davy had gone into the house. At a vine-hung window sat a comely woman, serenely knitting. A white cat arched its back against her shoulder, as it stood facing the strangers. The comely young woman lifted two quiet brown eyes; then she rose, as she laid aside her knitting. "Will you step inside, out of the sun?" she asked. We liked the sun, we told her, and also her courtyard. "Perhaps you come from down Suffolk way?" she asked tentatively. When we mentioned that, in the matter of heat, we had taken our training in America, the brown eyes were at their best—they were opened wide. This is a pretty trick of innocent children, and also of knowing women of the world, when they wish to look innocent. The owner of these eyes, to whom even womanhood had brought no guile, kept their soft wonder full upon us, as she shook her head. "America—it's a long journey. I've a cousin there; he never came back." We were familiar with those cousins, we might have told her; our country was full of some millions such as they.

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They were of the foreign tribes who had helped to people our wildernesses ; they were also among the settlers we liked best. It was those who never went back who made the best Americans. But these facts we refrained from mentioning to the comely young woman. One can always count on making one's self sufficiently unpopular without courting dislike.

Davy's appearance at the doorway just then was the signal for proffering "just a bit of something." We felt no manner of thirst consuming us, we told her. "Mrs. Sue never heard me suffering from that complaint," cried Davy, who had the look of a man who, already, had quenched several thirsts. As the two passed within the doorway, the girl who had gone for our milk crossed the yard. As we stood watching her, noting her young fresh loveliness, how was it that suddenly other equally fair shapes took their places beside her—that Maggie Tulliver, Hetty Sorrel, and Tess of the D'Urbervilles should also be crossing the sun-flooded courtyard, trailing before our eyes the memory of their tragic fate? The peace, the perfect stillness of the farmhouse enclosure, the herds of cattle and the droves of sheep moving under the fresh sunlight yonder, the very drone of the bees in the bushes, had brought vividly to mind those immortal types of women whose histories seem

for ever interwoven with such homely notes as the pouring of milk into tin cans, and the rhythmic thud of the churn. The farm-maiden, meanwhile, had deposited our milk-jug, and Davy's visit within had come to an abrupt end. We were about to depart when, in an inspired moment, we ceased gazing at a living picture and dwelling on tragedies, to confront both in one. As we turned toward the dyke, a stone building rose up before us. It was as unexpected a sight to meet on a remote country farm as would have been, say, the Tower of London or the New York Produce Exchange. The structure was sturdily buttressed ; it had fine Early English traceries in its regularly spaced windows ; and although its porch and belfry had long since disappeared, it was as unmistakably a chapel as if rows of choristers had been still intoning within its vaulted roof, instead of the impatient stamping of beasts stalled within its walls.

"It's a barn, ma'am. A chapel? Yes, ma'am, it was St. Benet's chapel ; but it's been a barn since before I was born."

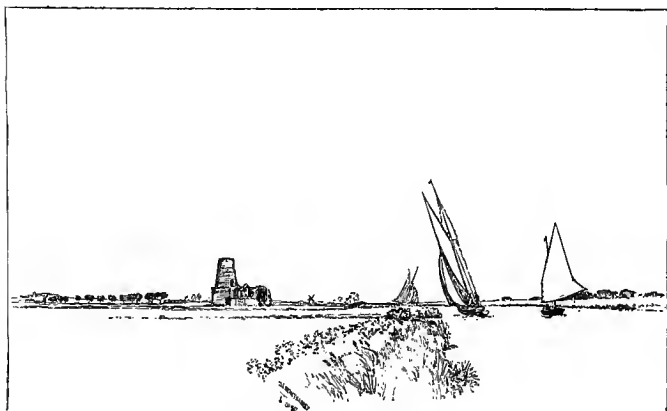
Both Davy and the farm-maiden took the chapel-barn very composedly ; they had been brought up to a stoical indifference of ecclesiastical ruins turned into secular structures. Davy was even disposed to be

severe with us. "The wind won't hold, sir; it'll be falling light as the day wears. We'll never get to the bridge." That threat brought us to our senses and also to the boat.

In an incredibly short space of time we were once more afloat. The wind, so far from showing itself a laggard, seemed bent on proving the strength of its power, now it had the wide spaces of the marshes for a clear course. It was good to be under way once more. Pleasant it was to hear Davy's familiar refrain, "Ease the main-sail! Let out your jib! Ease her! Start her! Shake her up! Oh, ho! Now I think we'll have the weather-gauge, an' as fine a day as one can hope to see on the river. We'll make Potter Heigham in no time." So far in love with the weather had he fallen that Davy even took time for a bit of historic gossip. We had not made half a dozen tacks before he broke out, with an eye scanning the marshes:—

"The chapel you see, sir, was a part of the old abbey. We'll be sailing past a bit of it as soon as we get out of this. The abbey, they do say, was a monstrous building. There's a gateway an' some of the wall to be seen as we go past it; and that farmhouse was a part of the abbey-grounds, as I've always understood, an' that's how it comes the chapel is there."

Our sailing past what was left of the famous pile came even sooner than was promised. The marshes to the left were an unbroken plain. Out of the tufts of grass there grew suddenly the huge outlines of an ungainly mill. From the lower, southern side of



ST. BENET'S ABBEY

the armless structure there blossomed a lovely Gothic portal. Clearer and clearer became the detail and form of it ; the fan-shaped ribbing of a vaulted roof sprang from the broken columns ; here and there, within the portal, were bits of time-worn border traceries, tottering canopies, and a pile of shapeless capitals. The bank along the river showed faint traces of broken bits of wall, of sunken towers

and ramparts, now entombed under mounds of turf. To such an end had come the glory of this mediaeval conventual pile. Great and redoubtable had been this home of mitred abbots. The black monks of the Order of St. Benedict had turned the convent into a fortified castle, and so long ago as the eleventh century these cloistered warriors had held out against William the Conqueror. The holy men continued to hold their place in this kingdom with their fortress for a convent, until one day in King Hal's time, when one of their abbots went up to Norwich to reign as bishop in that "churchiest of towns," he carried the revenue of St. Benet's along with him. And on that day the sun of prosperity went down upon this castle of the fens.

For many a turning and twisting, in and out among the river bends, were the outlines of the mill and the abbey portal to mark for us the brevity of human grandeur and the speed of our own sailing. As we drew closer to the mouth of the Thurne, the sails and boats on the river gave us warning we were once more approaching one of the favourite river-stations. Trees and windmills were set about on the plains as if grouped for the immortalising touch of a Cazin or a Hobbema. Over the tops of the grasses, the flight of the boats

and the moving arms of the mills gave a singular look of conscious life to the scene. Far off, like things seen in a dream, the spires of Horning and of Ranworth mistily pointed heavenward. The marshes were now aglow with light. To the west there was nothing to break the sweeping stretch of sunlit meadows. Beyond St. Benet's Marsh lay Ludlam Marsh. On these marshes for how many centuries had that same glow lighted the dying day! Before ever the Druids reared their temples beneath the trees, or the Vikings' prow had ploughed the quiet rivers; before Caesar came to show this new country to the Romans, as one more rough jewel to be added to their national tiara,—the same light had dawned, had faded, and had died into the dark of a thousand nights.

Across the plains came strong, salty smells. One sniffed the sea from afar. Except for the boats, only windmills and cattle peopled this vast stretch of earth. The latter were up to their middle in the deep grasses. Davy pointed to a group, near by, naming a farmer whom he thought was their owner. "An' there's no better feedin' anywhere. The cattle as is fed on these 'ere marshes is known all over the kingdom. They fetches high prices in the Yarmouth markets. Noble animals is cows

and bulls! An' it's a fine sight to see 'em range an' feed. It's their natur', that's what it is. They've good stomicks, an' that's what one needs in this world, man an' beast—good stomicks, an' plenty to fill 'em with."

Now, for a materialist, Davy made no obtrusive insistence in preaching his propaganda; and yet what man who lives close to nature but is a believer in the earliest of all human philosophies? Civilisation is not a sure cure for all the mistakes of a primitive order of development. There is a certain nation we all know and many of us love, who are said to make gods of their stomachs, as do these fat cattle. The latter, it is true, have at least the altruist's excuse; for by their industry in eating they will, in the end, benefit some one else.

Cattle, plains, windmills, sails, and boats—for miles and miles these were presented in a series of groupings of an endless variety. The outlook was being reduced to elemental outlines. Wider spaces of both land and water brought the discovery that we had left behind us those features which we had fixed as essentially characteristic of a Broads landscape. Trim gardens, bushy banks, the cottage close to the river-side, and the life of an agricultural country, with moving scythes, farmers' carts, and men

and women abroad in the fields—all these features were gone. As far as we could see, there was only a mass of moving grass, with a distant church-spire to hint at a village clustering round its base.

The Bure widened suddenly once more, for no



IN A NARROW CHANNEL

appreciable purpose. Davy brought the tiller round with a mighty swing ; and we were heading straight for a creek that seemed about a yard wide, but considerably expanded as we approached. It was no creek : it was a full-fledged river. We were floating on the waters of the Thurne. And the Bure went onwards towards the sea.

Now that we knew it to be a river, we gazed at the Thurne with the outward respect one shows to so important a water-way, but in our inmost souls we still called it a creek ; and an uncommonly small creek we thought it. The audacity of a yacht's sailing up such a stream might have struck us at the beginning of our cruise ; we knew better now than to be surprised at anything. To find our boat walking about on dry land would have called forth no further comment than to praise the grace of its speed. As for the shores of the Thurne, perhaps the less shores are insisted on, as an essential feature of a river's make-up, the better. Tall reeds did duty for trees. Swans were, at first, the river's only visible population. Farther up, some children parted the swaying reed-stalks, slid into a flat-bottomed boat, the last passenger to get in giving the boat a vigorous push, and the other bank, which was no bank, was thus reached. But these travellers were exotics. The swans were the indigenous element. Of these one family party was greatly affrighted at our approach. The parent pair had but a single cygnet ; it was guarded as closely as an only child is always watched and cared for. The two elders and their infant were taking their evening constitutional ; the youngster was ahead. As we bore down,

the parents gave a terrified glance behind, squawking as if a visible death were upon them. Their screams brought their babe to a sharp right-about ; he was pushed well up against the reeds, while his protectors spread themselves and their wings into a vast white barrier, completely hiding the cygnet from view. As an instance of smartness in the art of defence, it was a masterly manœuvre.

Davy was in the act of showing us the spire at Horning, twenty miles away, and the crumbling crown of St. Benet's, and some new church-towers, up northward, were being brought to our notice, when he stopped talking to shout,

“Ease her! Ease your main-sail! Fly to your jib! I'll want her down in a jiffy!”

The reed banks had given way to grassy fields. A short distance ahead, the skeleton outline of a towering railway bridge loomed up, and beyond, a lower, stone-built arched one. There was a great fleet of boats moored to the low shores ; their masts stood up like naked trees against the soft sky. On the river-bank—for here at last was a genuine bank, one to be treated as such—were any number of strollers, in racing hats and silhouettes, taking a turn before sundown.

Meanwhile, we were industriously running down a

boathouse. Davy had lost his head and his estimate of space, at one and the same moment. In attempting to make a fine flourish of an entrance, he had miscalculated his distance from the bank. With a loud crashing noise, the *Vacuna* ran her bow straight on-to the door of a low boathouse. Being a wise little door, it yielded to pressure and to the hand of fate; it went down before us with a mild moan. Those particular bits of wood would never rise up and be a door again.

"You blind fool you, can't you see what you're headin' us into?" came with a shout of fury from the helm.

Now, that was an exceedingly ill-timed remark for a clever man to make; and its foolishness brought its immediate punishment. The shore, as one man, rose to protest.

"Who's holding the tiller, I should like to know?"

"I say, Davy, the beer's been uncommon good on board, and plenty of it too, I'll warrant!"

"Wait till the hold man comes along. 'E'll be callin' the right man a fool, 'e will!"

It was in the teeth of such a chorus that we made the port of Potter Heigham. Davy should certainly have reflected before making the above remark. In

ports where a man's habits are known, the wise mariner takes a reef in his speech.

Now it is also a fact to be deplored, but there were two boys on board who were sent into a little heaven of ecstasy by the manner of our landing. I say "boys" with intention; for grown men, I have often noticed, are never older than the youngest of their sex when some other man makes an ass of himself. The *pro tem.* owner of the *Vacuna* shouted with glee when Davy ran the door down. The demolition of the fleet would probably have sent him into an Homeric convulsion of laughter. As for Grimes, he fairly slapped himself blue in his glee. "My hi! but that was a good one!" he panted, between his gusts of merriment.

"Hold your tongue, an' catch hold of the jib, will you? We'll anchor on t'other side; 'twill be more private," cried Davy, straining at the tiller.

By this time we were as conspicuous as a stump orator. The cruisers, the boats' crews, the gentlemen on the decks and the ladies on shore, were giving us the benefit of their entire attention. Our being in the public eye, so to speak, spurred Davy to do his best. Never was a boat swung out of one bank, and sailed away in a space no larger than a good-sized bed-chamber, towards another, more neatly and

dexterously. For steering, and for going "tidily" to his anchorage, when he gave his mind to it, Davy could score as great a triumph as he could in running down unoffending timber. We came about with a grand flourish ; the jib went down with a rattle, and the anchor was cast the moment after.

"So this is the way you take a port by storm! Have you demolished all the stations along the Bure in the same high, Gothic fashion? You Vandals!"

On the other side of our gang-plank stood Renard. In an instant he was aboard. On the whole, we liked his jeering. What we liked even better was his having come to fetch us for tea on board "Cross's wherry."

CHAPTER IX

UP THE THURNE—POTTER HEIGHAM

THE scene along the shore was a stirring one. Far as the eye could reach the boats were moored, their bare masts making a mass of clean timber against the sky. Innumerable flags and pennants were flying, for no better reason, apparently, than because the gay colours went well with the blue of the river. The boats' decks, the shores, and the meadows beyond, were alive with people and cattle,—a somewhat mixed company, in which cows with black and white hides fantastically striped matched well with two curates in the black of their broadcloth and the whites of their clerical ties. From beneath the striped awnings stretched over the decks, came the clatter of tea-cups and the murmur of many voices.

“Gay—hey?—and effective for such a flat bit of earth,” was Renard's comment, as he swept us along. “As a show, it's been as good as a play the whole

day, and better than most plays, for one wasn't bored with the dialogue." Renard's next gesture covered the breadth of earth and the sky space before us. "Tell me where you'd see as much colour, and good colour, and such a lot of variety in the grouping. These English—*ces Anglais* as our French friends call them—are the greatest open-air stage-managers in the world. They're——"

Here our friend's encomiums of English taste in the setting of boating-scenes on small rivers was cut short. We had reached the wherry, and Violet Belmore was standing on the gang-plank, with outstretched hands. The manner of her greeting was no surprise. We had counted on our welcome being a warm one; its somewhat tropical temperature, however, was unexpected. The questions also, flung out at us over the deck-rail, were, or would have been elsewhere, somewhat unusual.

"Did you get any cream?" cried Violet, in an accent of distress, as she grasped our hands.

"And eggs and bread?" eagerly added Lady Marten, with a pucker of anxiety on her smooth brow.

"If not, there's starvation ahead of us." And Sir Reginald looked as serious as a bishop.

Now it was that our well-stocked lockers filled us

with pride. We gave to our sympathy that form and substance without which the article is so often but the very skeleton of comfort. Certain orders rang out over the wherry's long cabin to the *Vacuna's* crew, that made the sun of our popularity shine forth as never before. I doubt if the most matchless graces of mind or form could have won us so triumphant an entrance on the stage; fully conscious though we were of being praised for acts with which we ourselves had had nothing whatever to do—for, had we not indeed openly rebelled at Jameson's over-liberality in provisioning the yacht? Was it an inspiration of our own or that of our cautious and far-seeing Davy that had given us our stores of fresh butter, and cream as sweet as new honey? We were no better than our fellows, yet we smiled the smile of liberality, and kept our secret dark.

This particular tea lasted as long as many a dinner. Harrowing were the tales of the day's suffering. Cross had hurried them on here, hoping to reach the bridge in time to run down to Yarmouth for supplies, in case the inn failed to yield the necessary provender. The wind had been light, and at noon they had had to quant half their way up the Thurne. They had made the bridge only to find the inn larder empty and its bar dry. Supplies,

however, had been telegraphed for to Yarmouth and Norwich.

“But now you’ve come, and half your stores are perishing for want of consumption, you will ask us to dinner. And mind, bring out your nightingales’ tongues and peacock-breasts. We’ll turn pirates if you cheat us out of so much as a ham-rind!” This was Renard’s announcement as we sat out on deck, full of tea and content.

“And now, what are we to do next? We’ve two good hours on our hands.” It was but six o’clock, he added, and there was the best part of an English evening before us. The lights on the river and the marshes were at their best, as were the spirits of the company. “There’s a church at Martham; that’s three miles off, to the south. Then there’s Heigham Church to the north, and some thatched roofs, not more than a mile away. Which shall it be?”

“Mr. Renard’s been here two hours, and he knows the whole country as well as if he’d been born in it!” cried Violet, in the tone of light mockery she seemed to delight in using when addressing the painter.

“Americans are so delightfully energetic,” said Sir Reginald, between two sensuous puffs of his cigar.

“Are there any ruins about?” asked Lady Marten, in a comfortable tone that went well with the ease of her posture. She was seated in a nest of pillows that filled a large, low wicker-chair.

“Oh, please not ruins!” pleaded Violet. “I must say I don’t care about ruins, either in buildings or in the flesh.”

After the laughter elicited by Violet’s outburst had subsided, Renard returned to the charge.

“To-morrow there won’t be a minute. We’ll be on the Broads all day. What walking is to be done must be done now.”

“Why walk? Why do anything? Is it because we are all quite happy and entirely comfortable, that you so insist on our bestirring ourselves?” asked Lady Marten, in her luxurious tones.

“Dear Lady Marten, why should you bestir yourself? You are in your own country; why move from room to room in one’s own house? But we are strangers—travellers. We’re not here merely to enjoy ourselves. We’ve as serious a task to perform as theological students preparing for Foreign Missions. We are under vows to cram ourselves full of information, that we may distribute the same to the barbarians. Motion, perpetual motion, that’s the vow the American traveller takes on boarding his

steamer. And now, fellow-sufferers, where shall we go to practise our religion of activity?"

Never had we felt so tepid a degree of interest in architectural outlines. We had had our fill of sights for the day. To sit still, and let our eyes do the wandering, this would have been our indolent choice. But there was no resisting Renard's burning desire to be up and away. He led us triumphantly onward, along the river to the inn. This was a path as crowded as a city's thoroughfare. Troops of strollers were abroad on the meadows; sailors, skippers, gentlemen, young girls, dogs, and mature matrons passed us by. The inn's timbered structure, close beside a three-arched bridge, was the rallying-point of this motley swarm of cruisers. As we came up to its low door, the babble of voices within made a strange discord. The rough jargon of the Norfolk dialect, the rich, boyish bass of Cambridge students' tones, and sailors' boisterous, guttural laughter, came out to us before we had caught a glimpse of the varied assortment of figures and faces assembled within the taproom. Renard, however, had come up to the inn to see, not the tapsters, but the landlady. She was a friend of his, he added casually.

"A friend made since noon," maliciously explained Miss Violet.

“The friend of an hour, but true as steel, as you’ll see,” retorted Renard ; and his boast, we found, was no vain one.

The inn landlady was as busy as a woman could be with “five dinners, a lawn tea, an’ ten to give beds to” ; but she came forth with composure in her smile. There had been no mistake whatever in Renard’s estimate of her feeling on his behalf. White flour paste to her elbows, she was yet eagerly anxious to learn the wishes of the tall gentleman with the masterful ways.

Renard was merciful ; he merely wished to engage in the agreeable traffic of a brief conversation. He had liked the looks of her kitchen, the old one, he remarked, with its dark interior and brown walls ; he had brought his friends to see its fine colour. This was clearly a severe blow to the amiable landlady’s pride in the newer room beyond, ablaze with light and the whites of its new walls and ceilings. But she led us to the older chamber with a smile. Presently she sent her own eyes abroad on a quest of discovery. What indeed could there be to admire in this dark, dull room, with its high old settles and its worn deal tables ! Two old men, with pipes in their mouths, sat motionless on the benches. Renard looked at them with a covetous eye. Such models

as they would be, in their faded corduroys and dingy vests and kerchiefs, and in the rich gloom of this old kitchen, for—well, for a dozen pictures.

“See, beyond, what a bit of perspective! Those high lights, and the blonde girls, working about, and those bent backs reaching for the brasses hung on the walls—that head there, rising out of the steaming pots on the range, and that yellow sun flooding the walls.”

He had found a perfect Dutch interior, one to his liking; and to retain his hold on the picture, he kept the landlady busy answering the questions with which he artfully plied her.

“Lonely, in the winter? Oh no, sir; it’s never lonely in this inn. What with being so near to the bridge, there’s such a lot of callin’, both winter an’ summer. Sometimes, perhaps, of a winter’s night, we’ve time to sit down, but never in summer. Go to church at Martham? We’re Heigham parish. We goes to Martham once a year, at Christmas maybe. It’s a fine sight, Martham Church. It’s as big as a town. The noise out yonder? It must be the boys and the men at bowls.”

“Let us go and see the men at bowls!” cried Renard, with characteristic faithlessness deserting an old picture for the sight of a new one.

A bit of a garden and a longish strip of turf lay between the back of the inn and a low mass of shrubbery. On the greensward were a dozen or more rustics. A huge pitcher and some beer-mugs were at rest on the ledge of a side-porch ; and over the beer-mugs three fair-faced girls, under broad-brimmed hats, were looking forth upon the rural gamesters. There was another group of cruisers close to the water's edge, with their eyes on the game. To the strangers' gaze and their comments, these players of bowls were supremely indifferent. Their cries and shouts filled the air ; and each throw was greeted with groans or a salvo of applause.

"Ho ! ho ! but that's a good lay in !" cried a bulbous-nosed farmer to his partner, as his ball flew close to the stake.

"Come on, partner, bowl 'im out !" shouted a slim rustic with the legs of an ostrich.

Another lean man, with a conquering nose, responded to that appeal. He sent his ball flying into the very midst of the others, scattering them far and wide, as his own lay securely at rest, close beside the stake. A great shout rose up, and the lean man was clapped on the back, and was shaken by the hand, and a half-dozen orders for beer rang out.

"A man needs consolins' after such a bowls as that, 'e do."

"You'll never do anything better than that in *your* life!" roared the big-nosed farmer.

"That's moine partner, that is," said the ostrich-limbed youth, with a strut and a nod of triumph.

"'E's the best player in 'Eigham, 'e is," was the information volunteered to our party by the oldest rustic of the group.

"A glass of beer with you, sir," was Renard's tribute to local talent. And his next announcement made him as popular as a king. "Beer for the crowd!" he said magnificently to one of the inn waiters. When the mugs were filled, he touched his own, made his new friends a ceremonious French bow, and turned, an instant later, on his heel.

The men sent after us their appreciation of this courtesy. "'E's a gentleman, 'e is." "'E's from foreign parts—a markiss, maybe, or a dook." "'E's a toft, an' knows sport, an' good sport."

"That's the worst of acting on an impulse," Renard reflected, with a half-tone of regret in his voice as we walked along towards the bridge. "One can't escape criticism of one kind or another. Give me the American for understanding when to keep silent. Perfect, the system of American drinking.

‘Gin or whiskey?’ you remark to the merest stranger west of the Alleghanies, if you happen to be near a man at a bar. ‘Whiskey, stranger,’ says your neighbour solemnly. And you both drink solemnly, with the formality of a slight nod as you tip the glass. Then the man wipes his lips with his handkerchief—if he’s a pocket-handkerchief man—and he nods, as he goes out. You never see him again. Perfect, that American system. You need never drink alone, and yet your hospitality isn’t used as a short cut to acquaintance. And, by the way, what a friendly country this is, to be sure. See these men pulling at their forelocks.”

“Mr. Renard, you are as capricious as a woman!” cried Violet, as she laughed up into the painter’s sun-burnt face.

“As two. We painters are worse than any woman; we are all impulse.”

“And no heart.”

“Perhaps. Hearts are troublesome things; so easy to leave them behind when you’re going on journeys; and then, you see, in such instances of forgetfulness, what goes on the journey isn’t worth a third-class ticket.”

“What have you done with yours?”

“Just now,” said the painter, with coolness in

his eye—"just now that organ is in your keeping. So I'm all here, as we say in America. I can keep my eye on it—and you." And he turned as he said this, with a certain change in his voice.

But Violet only smiled. She was not to be taken in by those quick changes of voice and manner which made Renard's usual practices with the sex so extraordinarily effective. She liked to be told such things, she said, and publicly too; it invested the confession with the dignity of a trust. She promised to return the article quite as whole as it came to her. And then she changed the subject. Wasn't this a nice bit of road, and weren't we glad we were walking along it, and not being dull on the river? We commiserated those of the party who had clung to their deck cushions; and we were honest in our pity. For once abroad on the highway, our own cramped muscles straightened, and with the frame in a glow, the lethargy of a half-hour ago seemed an inexplicable weakness.

The bit of a roadway that Violet had admired was in fine contrast to the flatness of the marshes along the river. We had soon walked into the heart of a thickly-foliaged country. Through a serpentine road, under the shade of bosky trees, we looked forth on a complete rural equipment of thatched cottages,

of gabled houses, and of widespreading barns. Into the blue of the sky rose the yellow domes of haystacks. Rustics with rakes over their shoulders came out of farm enclosures at the right moment for making a fitting accessory to a long line of cows. Renard had been right about the courtesy practised toward strangers at this village of Potter Heigham. The haymakers doffed their caps as they passed; the farmers, rattling along in their brightly-painted carts, touched their hands to their leathery foreheads; an old woman and a baby, both in the scantiest of shortened skirts and close caps, bobbed a courtesy from a doorstep; and a fair-faced curate in a wide-brimmed hat, who had been scattering gravel in his garden path, on raising his head to see the passers-by, as quickly lifted the broad-brimmed hat. The curate's bow was in the nature of a personal tribute. At sight of Violet's bloom, this son of the Church had mounted a most betraying blush—just such a blush, doubtless, had flushed the cheek of Adam when he first caught sight of a beautiful woman in a garden.

By the merest accident Renard had missed the curate's ingenuous confession of the effect of a London beauty on the rural mind. Renard was busy talking. Had he owned the highway and

this village of Potter Heigham, he could hardly have had more pride in proclaiming their beauty.

“Don’t lose the light out there on the marshes,” he had cried, in his masterful way ; “or the tone of that pink on the river, as we look back ; or the sparkle of the sun, dimpling in those ditches. Look at the cattle, bending their backs over that shallow cup yonder. How warm their coats are ! What a fine mass of reddish-brown they make against those pale gray willows—near the pond.”

At a turn in the road, beyond the curate’s garden, we had come upon this pool and the parish church. No sooner had we seen the church than we conceived a great liking for the edifice. It had a thatched roof for one thing ; and if there be a more fitting offering of peasants to their God than a thatched roof, I have yet to hear of the gift. The tower was a noble piece of masonry, with angels carved on its octagonal top that seemed to be looking askance at the dragons’ heads beneath them. Some of the windows were clearly restorations, but there was enough of the old structure left to give it a venerable look. If a parish church is to touch the right chord of sympathy, it must wear the dingy marks of old age ; discolorations are a great aid in producing such quick sympathy. Such a roof as this parish church possessed, so brown

and glossy, the rains having washed the weeds to a silken lustre,—one such roof as this could invest even a wholly restored building with the right sentimental suggestiveness. But Potter Heigham Church boasted other beauties besides its thatched nave. Over the side porch, on a toppling column, stood an archaic figure of rude modelling, weather-worn, with the vestiges of harsh usage still upon the crumbling draperies. The history of the statue we learned from a wandering rustic of tender years but of mature faculties. With his hands in his pockets he had been an interested spectator of our inspection of his church and rectory. The statue had been buried for years—for a hundred or more the lad stated, with historical deliberation; then it had been dug up, not more than twenty years ago, when his father was young. It had been placed yonder and the pedestal given. It was Saint Nicholas, and the church was named after him. He was the saint of little children; he was holding one child in his hand, only it had been broken. And that was the rectory yonder; those cows at the pond were the rector's own. And there was a new-made grave in the cemetery; should we like to see it? He would show us the way.

“Thank you, my lad; not this evening. New-

made graves aren't exactly the sights we are looking for ; but I'm glad you like them. Hamlet did. Did you ever hear of Hamlet?" asked Renard, with the look of an honest man, facing the boy's large dark eye.

"Hamlet's a prince—in a play," sternly answered the lad, with reproof in his tone.

"So he is; but how did you happen to hear of him?"

"My father's a reader. We have books at our house. I know all about Shakespeare and Robinson Crusoe and the Wandering Jew," stoutly summarised the lad ; whereupon Renard tipped him, complimenting him on his knowledge, and would have been entirely willing to dispense with further proof of his acquirements. But the lad had made up his mind to a wholly different plan. On our turning into the road, he formed himself into our bodyguard. He would escort us through the village ; people who laughed about Hamlet and Shakespeare were suspicious characters. He would keep his eye on us.

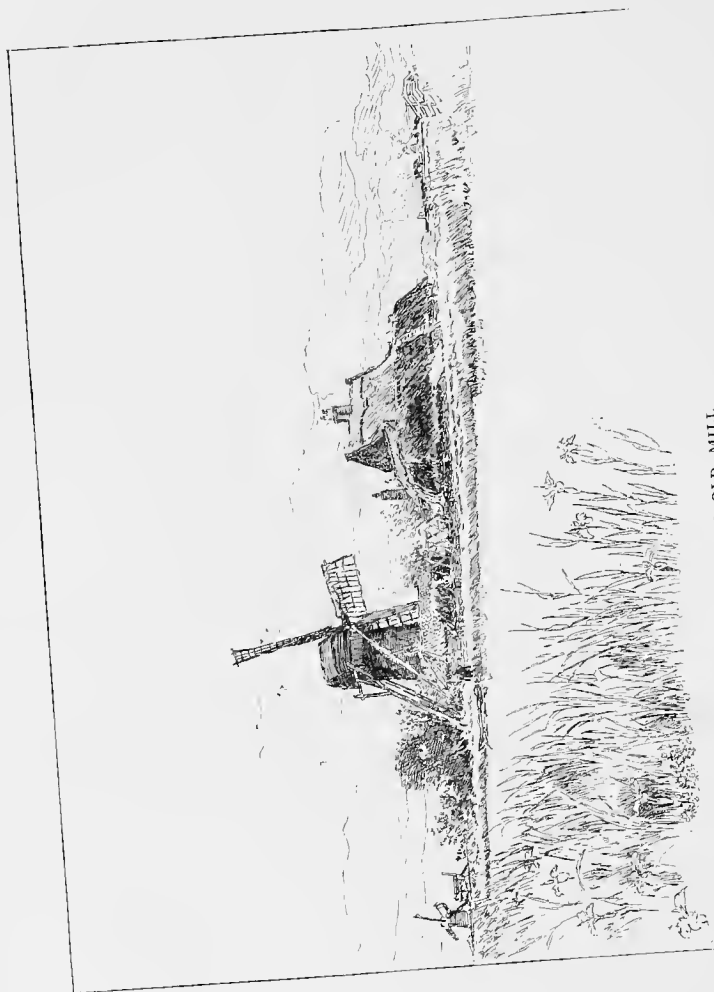
The sky was flaming in the west. Through the trees the landscape seemed to float ; and the rising mist was like an illumined gauze.

"What a picture, hey?" was Renard's comment, as we lingered, loth to reach the end of the road.

“It’s the very best hour for an English scene. The light on those village roofs and on the hedges and trees is so warm and yet so tender. Good village, this of Potter Heigham. Pity it isn’t paintable,” he added profanely.

“Not paintable?” echoed Violet, in a tone of horrified protest.

“No; it’s all pretty,—too full, too bushy, too round and fat and sleek. That’s the curse of most English landscapes,” Renard went on, with the irreverence of the man bred on Paris models. “As a composition, it’s impossible; it’s too perfect. Its finish, its completeness, kill the picturesque. A French village ‘composes,’ as we say. The road—do you remember the French roads?—white as chalk. If there’s a village, it has low, irregular walls, through which are narrow openings. French farmhouses are built like miniature fortresses. Epic, those walls, with their heavy stone archways, through which one sees the farmyard life beyond. In the courtyard you get hay-ricks, cows, chickens, manure, peasants in sabots, and children and women tied up in cotton night-caps,—the true farmyard life. Stunning, those spots of brightness. The spare foliage, the bushy trees, the straggling roses overlaying the low, dull, gray walls, a glimpse of a garden here and



AN OLD MILL

there! Well, in early May, when Normandy's in flower, I never saw anything better than a French hamlet, even in Japan."

This was a somewhat rash statement for even a painter, flaunting the red of the Legion of Honour in his buttonhole, to make on English soil. Renard was a brave man, and he had need to grip his courage by both hands; for suddenly the English patriot in our company brought us all to a sharp standstill. In the very middle of the road Violet Belmore planted the iron tip of her parasol. After this athletic demonstration, the young lady opened out the rattling fusillade of her rejoinder.

"What! English scenery not paintable? English hamlets, English country life, not inspiring, not rich enough in material, for a true painter's eye? Had Mr. Renard perchance ever happened to look in at the National Gallery, he would find his answer written on the walls there, and with a power and eloquence that needed none of her or any other defender's aid. Or, if he would give himself the trouble either to read the history of English art, or to jog his memory a bit, if he had ever once conned such pages, he would find that it was Crome and Constable who, refining on the Dutch masters' interpretation of homely scenes and rustic life, had

taught the French Millets, Rousseaux, Duprés, and Bretons to see their own country with new eyes. Modern French art, as every one knew, owed its birth to the Englishmen whom they had studied and copied. And poetry," cried this charming enthusiast, with a fine glow now on her cheeks, her eyes blazing from the fire within, "what French poet has ever set to such music the pastoral of rural simplicity, as our own Gray? Listen, and cap it if you can."

Then, under the arch of the great trees, there rang out the sweet strength of the perfect voice—

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,"

and she finished the verse. Before she had done, she held her little audience as still as if in a trance.

"Go on," said Renard softly, in a voice that betrayed him as he spoke. He took his hat off, involuntarily, as if he had been in a church. There was nothing extravagant in the action. Violet's fervent tones, and the wondrous fitness of the recitation in this pastoral setting, suggested a devotional mental attitude.

"Then let us walk on," said Violet, as she moved quietly forward. "I like to walk if I am reciting,"

she added simply. And out from the leafy tent she led us, her voice gaining in firmness as the poetic cadence of the immortal verse swayed and moved her.

We were submitting to that modern form of polite torture known as a recitation, yet we felt no inclination to escape. On the contrary, we walked slowly and still more slowly; we watched the receding profile of the village's thatched roofs with poignant regret; and we saw the rich gloom of the now darkening trees give way to the flatness of the marshes with impatience. But then, you see, this young lady was neither sawing the air with her arms, nor was she attitudinizing, nor did she scream nor rave nor rant. She was speaking the melodious English verse as naturally as she might have been reading it, alone, in the silence of her chamber. Some of us, I know, seemed to be hearing the wondrous lines for the first time. Although we had all, doubtless, learned the poem as children at our mother's knee, and the words and the phrases had perhaps shaped our thoughts through all these intervening years, yet now, in this perfect English setting, the truth that lay in the heart of the well-worn poetic similes, the simplicity of the descriptions, their force and perdurable charm, as well as the pathos that long ago had wrung our hearts, along with the grandeur

of thought that had stirred the imagination,—these were truths and beauties realised as never before.

Across the field, where the ploughman was plodding his homeward way to the drowsy tinklings of the distant bells, we heard the added note of the twittering swallows. Only a moment since, and we had stood beside that church where “each in his narrow cell for ever laid, the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep”; and through the glimmering landscape we had but to glance in at doors to see the blazing hearth, the busy housewife ply her evening care, and note the homely joys that are “the short and simple annals of the poor.”

“Hark ! how the sacred calm that breathes around
Bids every fierce, tumultuous passion cease ;
In still, small accents whisp’ring from the ground
A grateful earnest of eternal peace.”

“Did you know that stanza ?” asked Violet, after she had finished the poem. “It is one of the four inserted in Gray’s original manuscript. I have always thought it as beautiful as any of those in the poem. ‘The still, small accent whisp’ring from the ground,’—how delicate was the thought, was it not ?”

Violet’s eulogy met with but a feeble response. Two of us, at least, were in a daze ; we were in that happy realm where sensation is the sole conscious life.

We were but dimly aware of the earth itself being in a golden glow ; we felt our feet striking the bridge's roadway ; we knew we had stopped for a moment, to lean on our elbows, that we might overlook the meadows and the river. It was still through the swimming mist of a sort of indefinable ecstasy that we looked forth at the cows below us, drinking, not water, but a Pactolian stream ; that we saw the western sky was golden, and of an exceeding glory, and that the marshes were of gossamer texture ; while, on the river, the yachts' masts were all of gold, and the rigging had spun for itself a web of gilded filaments.

It was Renard who broke the trance. "Gad ! but I'm hungry," he cried out, with a big voice ; and he shot on ahead as if he had been running for a wager. He cried back at us, "Miss Vi, it's all your fault ! There's nothing like emotion, in the open air, to give one an appetite. We were all as teary as a Swiss waterfall, and now I could eat a whale. Good ! there's Davy. He's announcing dinner from the gang-plank. I say, old boy, did you order the champagne cooled ? "

So much for the man of sentiment.

CHAPTER X

HICKLING BROAD AND HORSEY MERE

GREATLY against our wish or will, we were up and stirring early the next morning. On this occasion, as on many others, we remembered that, while in theory, this cruise was a pleasure trip—one conducted solely on the principle of a sybaritic enjoyment ; in point of fact, we were at the mercy of two masters whose rule was even more tyrannical than a timetable. These, our rulers, were the wind and the tide. Once you take to the water with a sail, and your doom is sealed. You may scorn early starts ; but if the wind has gotten up in a hurry, with a look of faithlessness in its eye, where will you be, if you fail to take it in its blowing mood ?

It was the news of the wind that routed us out at an early eight. Davy was calling his matutinal bulletin down the awning flap. “They’re mostly getting up an’ off, sir—them as is goin’ on the

Broads. They're lookin' at the wind, sir. It's puffy an' treacherous, an' that's a fact." We knew better than to argue that statement; and although but half-awake, were soon eating breakfast.

Once on deck, and the tune of our early morning discontent was soon changed. There was an irresistible challenge in the universal sparkle and brightness. If the wind was treacherous, it had the charm of the faithless; it had set into lively motion every leaf and wavelet. The trees were aflutter with excitement; and the river had prattled to such purpose in among the reeds and along the sides of the boats, that every wave had mounted its plume of snowy foam. This unwonted stir had started a good deal of commotion of a different order. The high wind had kindled the spark of a great energy amongst our fellow-cruisers. Old and young were engaged in a variety of preparations. Jolly-boats were being loosed from the yachts, luncheon baskets were agape, and the smaller sail-boats were having their masts lowered that they might slip beneath the Bridge's low arches.

The day's expedition was to be made mostly in small boats. The Broads about to be explored had the reputation which fascinates; they were said to be as wild as nature had made them. As the streams

leading to Hickling Broad and Horsey Mere were honest streams, openly confessing their shallowness, the large boats were left at their moorings.

Our own party was soon ranged along the inn gardens, ready for embarkation. Here, a dozen or more small boats, with oars shipped and sails ready to be stepped, were bobbing up and down. Provisions and wraps were being hastily stowed away. As at Wroxham, the inn was sending most of its own bar and larder aboard; and also, as at that station, we and our fellow-cruisers had soon struck up an agreeable, fleeting intimacy. Every one was talking at once. No one, not even the skippers present, were listening to the orders given. Violet's appearance, in a light blue yachting costume, had been the signal for most of the youthful males suddenly to lose all lower forms of consciousness, to muddle their oars, and spend valuable time in staring. Renard, not to be outdone in creating a stir, was stalking about, asking if there were no canoes to be had. Sir Reginald, in a dazzling suit of white flannels, could be heard expostulating with him.

"My dear boy, no one does these Broads in a canoe; they're a bit dangerous, don't you know, with this sort of wind. I really wouldn't think of trusting to a canoe." All of which excellent

reasoning fell on deaf ears. The imagination of the artist had been stirred by the thought of a canoe, and a canoe he must have. There was one to be had ; it lay under a shed on the opposite bank, —the “Waterman’s Arms” innkeeper remarked laconically.

“Cross, just get me the canoe, will you?” was Renard’s quiet command.

And thereupon it was the turn for the shore to stare at the painter. The canoe was duly brought round, and Renard was about to step into it, but Davy had a word to say. A canoe, our skipper hoarsely whispered, was all very well in a calm, or when the wind went light, as Sir Reginald had said ; but if he, Davy, might make so bold, he must say, with such a wind as was “goin’” this morning, a man would have to look sharp not to come to “his grief.”

“Looking sharp,” Renard stated in reply, was one of his many accomplishments ; furthermore, he gave both Davy and Cross to understand, as they eyed him anxiously, that in certain Maine lakes in far-off America he and his canoe had been the heroes of adventures that made this paddling about in these Broad’s pools they called lakes and streams, a be-littling performance.

“Hickling Broad’s shallow, that I don’t deny.

But no canoe can live there, with a sail up, in such a wind. An' that I do say," was Davy's last word of warning, as he turned on his heel to see to the stepping of his own mast. Later, as he went on with his task, he muttered uncomplimentary remarks of a derogatory nature—remarks which Renard would greatly have relished. He ended his soliloquy with a disparaging comparison between "women an' artistical gentlemen," and "geniuses as is as obstinate as mules an' as stupid, sometimes—I do believe."

Meanwhile, Renard was already amid stream. His paddling soon won him a good deal of comment. There was a quick sportsman's recognition of Renard's skill in the handling of his paddle; and quite a number of men, both young and old, stopped, in the very midst of their own preparations, to glance at the distinguished-looking stranger and to join in a chorus of praise. Davy was visibly affected by this public approval; his condemnation passed away in a prayer for the canoeist's safety. A brief biographical hint was flung out to the lookers-on along the shore, to the effect that "the gentleman had learned his canoeing from Indians maybe, who are said to be very handy with a paddle." "He's an American, I believe," commented a handsome youth, shouldering two oars, to his companion, a girl by his

side. "He's very good-looking," was her feminine verdict.

There was one person no longer on shore, but seated now in the stern of a small sail-boat, whom Renard's caprice had visibly annoyed. Violet Belmore was not used to desertion, and she was not above showing her displeasure. She turned her head resolutely away from the artist, and refused to return the salute of his paddle.

Why hadn't he taken her in? we asked. Violet shook her head. She had begged him to, she said, but he had told her calmly that, as he should probably get a wetting, he preferred to do it alone. "I don't mind a wetting—not in the least. So vexing of him, isn't it?" she pouted.

Once we were off, however, her good-humour was quickly restored. For a brief part of our course our boats were quite near. Renard was already well ahead, and his taunts to our skippers to "come up and have a race" were growing fainter and fainter. Gradually, as we sailed away into the open of the meadows, the little fleet of boats fell apart. Above the level of the flat fields we could trace their course by the drifting, slanting, or scurrying of the tiny sails as they met the fate of the wind.

At starting forth, we were full of a gleeful

exultation. The sailing close to the water, between the level of the banks, in a boat small enough to make a constant adjustment necessary as the wind changed, brought a certain agreeable feeling of novelty. If the yacht had seemed a monster in these little rivers, the *Pride* was at least of fitting size. To her fitness she now added the zest of a possible danger. Once out and away from the shrubs and the bridges near the inn, we soon found we had a wind of no ordinary temper with which to reckon. At its worst, along the narrow Heigham River, it could only send us careering along occasionally, as the sail bent before a puff of unusual strength. Our speed was swift. The sensation of flying over the leaping waters was decidedly exhilarating. Even when we left the river and turned sharp down left to enter Candler's Dyke, we were only sensible of the amusement of bobbing about on a narrow stream, and yet to be doing such a prodigious amount of sailing. We bestowed a good deal of attention on the landscape. With its main features we were fairly familiar. Marshes were not new to us. But our point of view had changed. We were so close to them now as to seem almost a part of them. Trees there were none; we might have been sailing between miles and miles of pampas. The first

windmill we passed towered above us as tall as a church. Even a modest bush or a farmer's cottage took on large proportions. In the universal flatness, and beneath such a width of sky, every object in the landscape was extraordinarily exaggerated. The colours on the marshes and along the river were equally intensified. The greens were deep, intense; the plumage of some swans were dazzling in their white brightness; and on the narrow river the glare of the light was intolerable.

In this untempered noon glow it was a relief to turn to the reeds that parted now and then, rent by the wind. The marshes were peopled here and there by groups of men, haymakers, standing up to their necks in the grasses. We heard the crisp cutting of the stiff stalks as the sharp scythes swept through them. Hay-carts were standing about, and the men were tossing the tied reed-bundles into them. Along the dyke we met a strange craft. A man was seated on the top of a large cargo of the rushes. He seemed to be navigating a haystack. Of his broad, flat-bottomed boat nothing was to be seen; the reeds were piled high, overflowing the poles stuck in here and there. As the raft slowly drifted by, a part of the meadows seemed to have slipped into the stream and to be taking its passage seawards.

These flats have a harvest of their own, Davy told us; the reeds were an important Norfolk product, and for thatching and braiding were in great demand.

Along Candler's Dyke some of the promised wildness was about us. The dyke was walled away from the world by its monster rushes; there was a great and perfect stillness broken only by such sounds as accentuated and intensified the sense of remote waters. The shriek of the water-hen here was louder than ever we had heard it on the river; the cries of the coots and the whistle of the pheasants had that ring one only hears in lonely waters.

From this dyke we ran swiftly into a huge, shallow sheet of water, Heigham Sound, that seemed an innocent stretch. Yet here we had our first encounter with the difficulties about to beset us. Once away from the protecting shores, and the wind laid our sail almost flat upon the floating garden of lily pads. We then shipped our first water. As Davy was sitting in the bottom of the boat he naturally changed to the seat. This change made another necessary. With so fresh a wind as was blowing, Davy had to look sharp to his sail, and it fell to our task to ballast the boat. At first the lively jumping about was amusing. But we shipped

more water ; when the boat went about we could not always manage to keep clear of the pool that increased in volume with every blow of the breeze.

“We’ll soon be on the Broad, ma’am ; we’ll be racin’ then. Will you shift, please?”

We moved obediently. The boat promptly careened. In trying to keep our balance our feet went into the pool. As soon as they were out and safely tucked away, we were bidden to “shift” once more. Then we shipped more water. What between the gymnastic exploits of “shifting,” trying to keep dry, and in our boat at the same time, I found my impressions of Heigham Sound becoming less and less clear.

There was no danger, of course ; but it is a fact that I was entirely fascinated by the ways of the wind with our sail. Would it lay the latter flat upon the water at the next tack ? should I be able to hold on, to dodge the boom, to keep my seat securely, to get my skirts well out of that shining water, or should I plump down ankle-deep into the wet ? Usually I effectually managed the latter. Now I challenge the most enthusiastic lover of nature to sing verses to its beauty when one is engaged in athletics. And although by the time an hour had passed I had become fairly expert in the above detailed exercises,

it is a sad truth that limp skirts and wet feet are great drags to the imagination. Long before we were careening towards the middle of Hickling Broad, I was dead tired of serving my time as human ballast.

Meanwhile the breeze had freshened considerably. On Hickling Broad it was blowing a very respectable gale. The shallow waters were a mass of white caps. And our boat might as well, from a view to any comfort in her, have been upside down. We lay on our beam end, for the most part ; that is, we lay thus when we were not righting, only to feel our sail pulling us over once more.

A particularly large mass of water was shipped just then, wetting both of the men aboard to the skin. After that, they agreed, with a fine air of condescension, that "it was a bit nasty." A second ducking a moment later sent us about in a hurry. Instead of testing the course of the wind in the open Broad, I noticed with a certain vindictive exultation that now that Davy was soaked, he was taking to the lea of the shore.

"There's no pleasure in this, ma'am, an' that's a fact," he said, as he sent us flying towards the reeds. "We'll soon have to bale out, an' in this wind it's a bit dangerous to be knocking about."

It was still blowing a gale from the south-west as we turned towards the sound. In a dumb sort of stupor, begotten of the great blowing of the winds and cold feet, I could see that Hickling Broad was keeping up its reputation. Its wildness had not been exaggerated. It might have been the lake of a newly found continent. Here nature had the scene to herself. Even the sails we had counted on for company had failed us. Our own boats were nowhere in sight. Either we had outsailed them, or, perchance, had any disaster befallen them?

Davy's spirit rose at the first syllable of our forebodings. He indulged quite merrily in a realistic recital of the various woes that might easily have overtaken the painter. He would scarcely have got as far as the sound; with this squally breeze blowing due south-west he might possibly have run up as far as the dyke. But he would by that time have shipped enough water to have sunk the Queen's navy. As for the gentleman's mounting his pocket-handkerchief of a sail, it was the "foolishest" thing he, Davy, ever did see. By now the sail was a nice mess of ribbons, was Davy's conjecture. He, for one, would like to see Mr. Renard and ask him how he liked canoeing in a squall. Davy painted the picture of these impend-

ing disasters with so much gusto that twice the *Pride* was within an inch of capsizing.

As we turned in towards the dyke, we were hailed by a man in a fisherman's boat. Were we of Cross's party? he shouted. Assured of that fact, he continued to bellow with all his might, for the wind was in his teeth. A gentleman in a canoe had paid him to come after us, he said. We were to meet him "an' his leddies" on the bank at Horsey Mere, "where the landin' wud tak' us straight on to the rabbit warren." They were awaiting us there. Davy nodded his head assentingly. The man's own head thereupon disappeared behind the screen of the reeds.

There was no changing our course till we came to Old Meadow Dyke, leading up to Horsey Mere. He hung close to the wind along Candler's Dyke till we bore away suddenly to our left. Up among the reeds was another narrow dyke; but there was plenty of water. After an hour or more of tacking, Davy at last slacked his sheet. Away we flew into a white sheet of water we knew at sight to be Horsey Mere. Not so large as Hickling Broad, the mere was quite as wild and of a more alluring aspect. Some low islands were set upon the centre of the lake. The shores, though flat and boggy, like

the Broad, were fringed here and there by tufts of sparsely foliaged trees. To the south a cluster of buildings resolved themselves into steam-mills that pumped the water off the marshes.

There was a fair wind on the mere. By hugging the lea of the reeds we enjoyed the first smooth sailing of the day. A foul bit of wind struck up as we turned to go into the narrowest stream we had yet entered. None but a Broads boat would have ventured between those close banks. Davy let down his sail in a very matter-of-fact way, and his practised hand had soon grasped the oars.

Quite a number of sailing boats had taken refuge in among the trees. Luncheon baskets were spread and there was a great popping of corks. After the blustering blow out upon the lake this quiet, with the merry voices coming from the bushy banks, was as soothing as a lullaby.

At the head of the dyke stood two men looking down upon us. Before Davy could ship his oars, Renard's voice was shouting from the banks:

"Suppose you try canoeing another time. It's much safer, and, from the looks of your boat, much dryer, too, I should say."

But at sight of our plight Renard's gay sarcasm died on his lips. Good heavens, we were wet to the

skin ! We might die of it. Both hands were clapped to his side pocket. Yes, he had the whisky flask. He choked us with the liberality of his dose. There was no appeal ; the horrible threat that surely we should die of the wetting, and I of the shiver I was in, was hurled at us at the first sign of our rebellion. Then the man beside him, with a commiserating look at our dripping state, said we must come into his house. The cottage was so near the bank that we were within the kitchen almost as soon as we had landed. A woman came from an inner room. Some chubby-faced children looked wonderingly up from the edges of her apron hem.

“ Would I step within ? ” the woman asked with a smile, and the children were at our heels in an instant. They were quite certain now of there being an excitement of some sort before them. When they were bidden sharply to go into the garden and stay there, their resentment exploded in an angry yell.

To the chorus of these protesting shrieks I was divested of my soaked garments, deftly wrapped in a blanket, and left to ruminate upon the adventure. If ever a woman had a kind heart, it was that English cottager’s wife. She was as just as she was kind. First she betook herself to the garden and administered correction to her howling offspring. She belaboured

them well, and then she opened the door and sent them in to look at the "leddy in a blanket." Two tear-stained faces gravely ranged themselves before the above spectacle. Conversation, at first, I found difficult. The sight before them was all the entertainment they needed. Now being looked at is generally as subtle a piece of flattery as any woman clamours for. Even children's gaze has been known to feed that innocent desire of all the daughters of Eve, to find a mirror in every human eye. But when four childish eyes are fixed upon one with that peculiar intentness reserved usually for the shows of a circus or for the pedlar, even a vain woman will quail.

A tightly bound blanket, however, is as compelling as the hand of fate. I could no more move than I could force my audience to open their minds in speech. I was better to them than the wonders of a picture-book. I moved, all of me, that is, that could, and I was alive. Little wonder they could not have enough of me. So the two crept closer, hand in hand, and looked with all their little might.

Presently the door opened; their mother came in, bearing a steaming cup. "It's just a drop of hot tea, ma'am, to keep the wet from strikin' in. Get on with you; get on, I say!" She handled her offspring

with practised skill, a single lunge sending them well out into the garden.

It was a good hour or more before we were dried and able to proceed on our way. The ladies and Sir Reginald were awaiting us a mile off, on the beach, Renard said. The roadway along which he hurried us was in no way suggestive of sea-beaches.

It is true I saw the country in a sort of golden glow. What with the wetting and the being steamed in a blanket, and the hot stuff I had taken, I was sensible of a mighty tingling of the frame. There are few roads in England that seem to me, even now, in retrospect, as perfect as that mile between the hedgerows, under the great oaks and chestnuts, with the tinted landscape swimming in noon glory spread out before us through the tree-trunks. There was a Shakespearian element of surprise in the swift contrasts the mile yielded. At the outset the country might have furnished the setting for the Arcadian forest scene in *As You Like It*; then a moor, that turned out to be a rabbit warren, suddenly sprang up beyond some grain-fields. Sand dunes lay on the other side of the moor, and a light breeze blew the taste of salt to our lips. Over the dunes basked the ocean's blue; floating shoreward were round-bosomed waves that fell, with the resounding

splash of their foam, along a wide and uninhabited beach.

In a certain sheltered corner of the dunes was a spectacle better to look upon than all the sea's turquoise regalia. Spread before us lay a white cloth ; on the cloth a great variety of viands were arranged ; and two golden-tipped bottles, in pails of ice, were cocking their corked heads at us. A fire of driftwood blazed away beyond the square of snowy linen ; and close to a steaming kettle stood Violet, whose voice, as she turned to greet us, was the speech of the inspired :

“You poor dears ! We knew how starved you would be ! Shall it be Mulligatawny or Ox-tail ?”



NEAR ACLE

CHAPTER XI

DOWN THE THURNE—TO ACLE BRIDGE

WE were awakened next morning by Renard's voice shouting down to us through the awning. With that want of feeling characteristic of the early riser, he told us we were to be up at once, and on board the Norwich train within an hour. The reason for so startling a move was given with brief but forcible illustration ; he lifted the flap of the awning, and let in a gust of moisture-laden wind. "It's a dismal morning—not rainy, but damp ; the skies are sullen, and there's no life in the air. By going up to Norwich, we'll kill a dull day, you see, besides cramming ourselves full of sights. Old houses and cathedral interiors are just as good under gray skies as blue ones," he argued conclusively.

But the man of our party was not so easily won. Although but half awake, Renard was given to under-

stand quite plainly that this critic on the pillow considered the plan, as a plan, not only foolish, but strikingly lacking in originality. Dull people could well be trusted to run up to a city on a rainy day for diversion and amusement, if one chanced to be yachting on dry land, where trains ran more freely than small rivers. As for him, the critic continued, and he gave emphasis to his utterance by an impatient toss on his pillow, as he had been at some pains, not to mention the detail of expense, to get as far away as possible from the asphalt of towns and the tyranny of sight-seeing, he proposed to go on with his cruise. Furthermore, he would be grateful to the gentleman at the awning if he could be allowed to finish his morning nap. The dialogue thereupon took a livelier turn. From both pillow and awning there flashed the fire of personal abuse. Each revealed what was his own secret estimate of the other man's character, and this summary was further embellished with allusions to certain sulphurous and celestial regions, which ladies are wont to connect with reverential attitudes and with their prayer-books.

"I shall tell them," Renard roared down through the opening in the moist canvas, "that you are too confoundedly lazy—that you'd rather sleep in your bunk all day than see a city as full of churches as a

pudding is of plums. I shall tell Miss Vi your enthusiasm for art is a sham; that you don't care a—hem!—for her or anything else, if you have to get up in the wet to see them. How about the lady? Is she a sham, too?"

Renard was once more told, in language as ornate as it was original and succinct, that the lady of the *Vacuna* would stay on board; that its party, as a party, was to go forth intact on their Broads exploring expedition.

"And you call yourself an American husband! A tyrant and a despot, that's what you are!" was Renard's delicate retort. "Lucky for you the missus can't hear you. Mutiny'll break out, and the Declaration of Independence be read over your corpse, if you don't muzzle yourself, my boy. Well, old fellow, then I'm to say you won't join us, hey? Sorry! It'll be no end of a lark. Miss Vi's got a cousin there, a sort of archbishop grandee; and there are some cathedral ceremonials coming off, I believe. Meet you at Acle, then, to-morrow or the day after. Good-bye, dear old chap!"

Then Renard closed the cabin door with a bang, and the skipper let down the awning-flap, and the wet and the moist wind were shut out.

An hour or so later, when we were entirely awake,

we found we had come to our reward. As if to repay us for our fidelity, the weather had changed its mind. It had taken on a smiling mood. The sun, as it shot in and out behind the ambush of the clouds, was busy drying earth's tearful visage, as a lover might, with the furtive gesture of one fearing to be seen, wipe away the signs of weeping from off his lady's face. Davy had taken a hint from the weather; he also was all smiles. He gave us a practical proof of his approval of our decision to stay by our boat. The deck had been neatly mopped; a minute table had been brought up from below, and on the snowy cloth Grimes had set a steaming coffee-pot, and had placed beside it a bunch of dripping wild-flowers.

“It's stuffy in the cabin; and so I says to Grimes, ‘Grimes, my lad, we'll set that little round table on deck, an' their breakfast 'll taste the fresher.’” Never was a genial prophecy more completely fulfilled. Of all our breakfasts on the Broads, this one, eaten *al fresco*, with a couple of munching cows for company, was the most entirely satisfactory. We were in excellent spirits, for one thing; for in truth we thought well of ourselves. It is not given to every one to rise to the heroic at seven in the morning. If heroism includes not only such moral fireworks as the display

of courage, but also the capacity to resist temptation, surely the former quality could not be denied us. Had we not put away from us the seductive attractions of an unknown and unexplored, and therefore doubly alluring, cathedral city? We had been true to this larger city of nature's own making, and were proud of our constancy.

Along the banks the little world peopling the marshes was beginning to bestir itself. A good many revelations of how our fellow-cruisers lived and fared came along with the wonderment that grown people should find any fun in this kind of life, with its accompanying hardships. A curate, above whose jersey rose a clerical tie to announce the dignity of his calling, was slipping in and out of the forward hatchway of his boat, with toasted bread on the end of a fork, the shortness of which accounted for his purple face. A lady, with a spinster's face and in a nunlike garb of sombre black, sat on deck making tea, with the solemn look of one performing a rite. A youthful couple on the opposite bank had returned to a more primitive rule of life. The young wife was within the small boat's stuffy hatchway, cooking her lord's breakfast. Her lord had assumed the true tribal attitude of a young chief towards women: he was

lying flat on his stomach on the cabin deck, with his head overhanging the hatchway; and he was giving the lady of his heart the benefit of his criticism and advice, with interjectional appeals to some of the mythical deities to look at a woman "who couldn't even fry an egg, by Jove!"

Was the unseen and unskilled lady a new woman, perchance, with diplomas for proficiency in chemistry, among other sciences, lying beside her marriage contract,—diplomas so lamentably useless when one came to apply the knowledge therein guaranteed to even so simple a culinary feat as the making of bread or the cooking of an egg? It is not to that modern nunnery, the cloister of a professional career, but to the kitchen surely the modern woman should go after graduation, if she wishes to capture her natural prey—the natural man, who, as in the Garden of Eden, is still prone to fall into the arms of any woman who tempts him through an appeal to his palate. On reflection I am not certain that, of all the organs, man's stomach has not held out longest against the enfeebling effects of civilisation. Even hell itself might learn a lesson in resistance from that organ, which refuses to be paved with the indigestible asphalt of good intentions.

What the natural man does in an extremity,

when left to his own resources, was sufficiently well illustrated in the boat next our own. Two elderly gentlemen—brothers, apparently, from the cherubic contours of their faces—had begun an ostentatious cooking of their meal on the river-bank. The stove and most of the cooking utensils had been brought up from below, and laid alongside their boat, as carefully placed as if for inspection. One of the elderly cherubs then lit the stove, and both sat down to watch its heating. It was the surrounding air rather than the stove that was presently hot; for the smoke rose, in a greasy column, into the clear ether. But the old boys looked at the blot on the fair morning atmosphere with bland indifference; they evidently had diagnosed smoke to be the natural attribute of lighted stoves. Other difficulties were not confronted with so calm a front. Was there any milk aboard? one old boy asked the other. No, there was no milk, replied the elder of the two. Was there any bacon? The bacon gave out yesterday, was the reply. What, in the name of several gods, were they to eat, then? was flung out, in a musical drawl. Then the two looked at each other, as one project after another for securing a breakfast suggested itself. At last, apparently, a decision was reached. Fate appeared, in the shape of Grimes'

head, that was suddenly projected out of our hatchway. The more elderly cherub acted with the quick impulse common to cherubic natures. He nodded to Grimes. With the alertness of a young animal, Grimes was out of his aperture, and close beside the two. The next instant he sent his heels flying in the air, as he ran towards the inn.

“That’s cool,” remarked Grimes’ temporary master, aboard our boat. The exceeding freshness of the proceeding, indeed, pleased us all. But the two old boys did not even condescend to see the humour of the situation. To them Grimes was a boy with legs; and they had a tip in their trousers pocket for the errand on which they had sent him. It was only a commonplace transaction, conducted on strictly business principles; both, or rather all three, had merely been lucky in making the combination so easily. “I wonder if they intend to hire Grimes to do the cooking,” was the further quiet remark of the man of our party; “because if they do, and they omit the formality of asking permission, there’ll be trouble.” The two elderly gentlemen were forthwith given a surprise. On Grimes’ return, one of them pointed to the several parcels he had brought with him, and said, “Would you just cut that ham, and put it in the frying-pan? And, I say, bring up the

saucepan from below for the milk, will you?" Grimes was allowed to get these utensils, also to place them on the smoky stove—even to begin cooking the gentlemen's breakfast; but the eye of the master was upon him. When the milk and coffee were coming to a fine boil, the latter gentleman raised his voice, and gave a brief command.

The effect was instantaneous. Grimes dropped the pots as if they had been the devil's own. The gentlemen-cherubs first stared, and then one of them, the younger, had the grace to flush, as he came forward, cap in hand, to make his apology. He had not known the lad was one of our crew; they had found themselves in a bad plight; and much more of the same tenor, he said, as he stood, with a boy's look in his clear blue eyes. With elaborate courtesy he was assured of the insignificance of his offence; and with a further interchange of courteous salutations the incident came to a close.

"It's all very well; I'm glad they apologised; but who, in the name of the immortals, did they suppose Grimes did belong to, when his head was poking out of our hatchway?" This murmur the elderly gentlemen did not hear.

Shortly after this assertion of our rights, preparations for our departure began. Although more than

half the yachts were doing the same, we were loth to leave Potter Heigham. These two days at anchor had sent the roots of a genuine liking into the soil ; we had grown used to the bare look of this bit of earth. The mere looking for a point or two of beauty amid its flatness had made us like it the more. That is the way men grow insensibly to love plain women, doubtless ; the search for attractiveness, perhaps, explains the mystery of their fascination : the lover looks upon his discovery as his own, and values it accordingly.

Potter Heigham, its dull waters and flat marshes, had a moment of positive beauty as we turned our bows into the narrow river. The sky was as change-ful as the play of colours in a kaleidoscope. The clouds were still of hilly heights and of mountainous outlines ; the sun was painting them to suit his own glory. They were travelling across the narrow azure slits as fast as we were scudding through the water. No sooner were our sails up than they were full ; no sooner had we gotten under way than we felt ourselves gliding down stream with the swiftness and ease of eels. The wind was in the right quarter and the tide was at its ebb. In a narrow river those two facts seemed to be of more importance to us than that the earth should keep rolling properly about its orbit.

Our having caught the tide at this, its right moment of falling, was no accident. Davy's complacent remark to the landscape, with his eyes abroad on the swirling grasses,—“It's a grand thing to learn your tides, it is ; it saves a lot of worry”—was his vague, but suggestive intimation that our good luck was due to no clumsy gambling with chance. In spite of both wind and tide being in our favour, there was some tacking done. Davy's breezy command to “Slack away the main-sheet!” “Haul in your jib!” “Ease her! Slack away!”—the sound of Grimes' heavy tread upon the deck as he ran to loosen his ropes ; the whistle of the wind as it spoke to the sails ; and the liquid hiss of the river as our prow cut into the shallow waters,—these were sounds that now had an agreeable familiarity.

In less than an hour we were out of the narrow waters of the Thurne, and had swept out upon the Bure. We rounded the reedy corner of the Thurne's mouth with something of a flourish. So good was our headway that we might have held our pace for a reach or two ; but a small cutter, a “chattereneer,” as Davy contemptuously christened the craft, lay across our bows ; and the four men who were managing her were working the sails apparently according to their fancy rather than mindful of the laws of river-

navigation. "Asses!" cried Davy, as he brought his own tiller round with a jerk. "Couldn't you have kept on our lee bow?" he shouted to the unskilled mariners. Eight eyes looked out with the vacant stare of dullards, but not a hand went forth to a rope. Grimes had been in a hurry for once; we bore away, and careened at just the right angle to escape a collision.

"Not nautical, those gentlemen—clerks, I take it, from Cambridge way. They come down here an' potter about, an' think sailin' a boat's as easy as tellin' off a yard of ribbon. Drownin' comes easy too," added our skipper grimly.

"Here's one knows his business, he does," cried Davy, with a kindling eye. "See how he holds her to windward, an' leaves us the roadway. He's a gentleman, he is, an' he's found out that if courtesy's cheap, it goes farther than most things on this airth. Good-day to you, sir, and thank you kindly."

"Good-day, good-day! You've a fine breeze, and a fine boat too."

The boy's face that looked up at us from the bottom of a trig-looking sailing boat was the face of a young Antinous. The head, with its thick crown of curls framing features as pure as a Greek's, was hatless; the nobly built torso might as well have been

nude, for the gauze tights that encased the upper part of the youth's body took the mould of the supple muscles, and gave forth all their play. Face, neck, and bared arms were as brown as a walnut. In the eyes there was the laughing life of a ripe but unspent vigour. The youth smiled up at us, and we smiled back, as well we might. For here was one of England's finest products passing us by ; and I doubt if any of the Greek youths who stood as models to the Athenian sculptors for the statues of their gods were better to look upon than was this nobly built, perfectly featured young Englishman. Phidias would have liked the lighting of this breathing statue ; for at moments the sun touched the rich colour of his skin, and gave us a man of bronze ; and the next, it was a white god under the gray skies.

The landscape came in for its share of this noon illumination. Some of the features along the shore were good to look upon once more. There were fewer houses, and less and less foliage than had trimmed the banks above the Ranworth and Horning marshes. The windmills were set closer than the church towers. The marshes were still wide and flat ; here and there a group of farm buildings, with some shrubbery about the main living-house ; the crow of a cock or a woman's shrill voice, calling across the

fields, recalled the features of the Bure beyond the Thurne's mouth. But the landscape was the newer landscape now growing familiar—the level plains of marshland or of grain, swaying as the wind swept them ; dykes carpeted with water-lilies ; the scant foliage of wind-tossed trees, and low bushes set close on shore ; windmills, extraordinarily imposing in such a breadth of earth ; far-away church-towers, holding up their gilded vanes mid the mists of a golden-dusted distance ; and overhanging these simple features, the great cup of heaven, filled just now with the froth of fleecy white clouds and the round ball of the brilliant sun in the west.

The sails we met were drifting towards one goal. From dykes and streams some yawls and lateeners were quanting towards an arched bridge. As we swept along, to Davy's usual refrain, "Is your anchor ready, is it ready, I say?" we passed the little fleet of yachts moored along a grassy bank. The boats' decks were crowded with figures. Fresh girlish faces, elderly gentlemen in youthful flannels, youths in frayed silhouettes, and bronzed sailors—such was the company assembled to meet us at Acle Bridge. Dozens of these heads were lifted as we sailed by. Another tack, a bearing down hard on the helm, shouts and some inarticulate profanity from Davy,

and we had come to our moorings alongside a bed of buttercups. One of the wherries, our nearest neighbour, had the look of a friend. A skipper we knew was sitting on deck with a pipe in his mouth.

“Hullo, Cross, any news?”

“None whatever, sir. I’m to wait my party’s pleasure.”

So were we, in point of fact ; but we omitted to mention the full ignominy of our fate to the inquiring ears of our fellow-cruisers. An interest in other people’s affairs appeared, indeed, to be the sole traffic in ideas carried on at this port. For the bridge was a quiet station. The gaiety, the bustle and confusion, that centred about Wroxham, and the spirit of adventure that pervaded the plains of Potter Heigham, were here replaced by a sort of country calm. Hitherto on coming into port our time for activity had arrived, and it was our anchor alone that had come to its rest in a meadow. Acle, however, like certain placid women, had no disturbing attractions to offer. We could sit about on deck and take a bit of a constitutional on the river-bank, and not be mentally abroad nor possessed by the itching desire to be doing something else. Altogether, we took a quick liking to the quiet local character. It was the fashion at Acle to be dull.

We were as dull as the dullest. Our cabin lights were put out at the hour the yachting world at anchor had set as the time of highest fashion for turning in. At nine not a single porthole sent forth a glimmer of light to the dark river.

CHAPTER XII

A MISTY MORNING

WE awoke the next morning to the ominous sound of falling raindrops. One look through the opening of our tent-like awning, and we knew what was before us. It was as wet a prospect as the eye could light on, even in England. The skies seemed to have come down several thousands of miles nearer the earth, as if to make their downpour the more effective. The river had lost all its spirit. Whatever turning of the tide it was, the river itself, under that merciless pelting of raindrops, appeared to have come to a dead standstill. Trees, shrubs, reeds, all were in floods of tears; and the landscape in general had the same look as the cows out in the open, that of enduring with the passive patience of animal resignation. After breakfast Grimes came to our rescue. He proceeded to turn the little cabin into a nest of warmth and cosiness. Some flowers, the spoils of his



A MISTY MORNING ON THE BROADS

attack of the evening before on the meadows, were placed upon the table; cushions were piled high in the corners; and, as we were briskly reminded, "in them there boxes was a lot o' readin' stuff, if we wanted it." This timely reminder sent our spirits up with a bound.

The library, unopened till now, had indeed been singularly neglected. Within those closed boxes there was the best of company. Who would repine, with the prospect of such companions aboard as Marius the Epicurean, as Bourget and De Maupassant? With such entertaining society, the wetter the day the better; the rain would ensure a more unbroken solitude than a bell-proof library. But in planning to pass our day with genius, we had forgotten the domestic talent aboard. Davy had the virtue of his defects; to him a rainy day aboard a yacht was a form of calamity to be met with the front of a Mark Tapley: "It's pretty bad, sir, but we gets a wettin' now an' then, an' it's good for the crops, besides givin' us a day to lay off." Our kindly skipper's conception of "laying off" was the putting on of a great energy, both of tongue and limb. The *Vacuna* was given as thorough an overhauling as could have been administered by the most relentless of New England housewives in

spring-time. Ropes were coiled and uncoiled ; chains and anchors jangled and crashed ; Grimes was set his task of a mighty scrubbing of pots and kettles ; and our own reading was enlivened by a painstaking series of well-planned interruptions.

To Davy, indeed, as to so many true men of action, books and reading were so poor an occupation that any man, possessing the rudimentary organs of compassion, must do his best to mitigate the evil. By the bracing effects alone of cheery conversation could a man be expected to get through his page. Now, as we well know, De Maupassant has a masterful way with him ; he ill brooks the diminishing or destroying of his effects. Before Davy had made his fifth conscientious interpolatory remark, De Maupassant refused to work the magic of his jugglery. Bourget had a larger patience ; his heroine, being a woman, was used to the discipline of interruption ; she could spin the snare of her charms in defiance of it. But Davy, with an Englishman's abhorrence of Parisians of questionable morals, had resented the lady's advent with a peculiar firmness. Down the hatchway the news that "the fish was bitin'" was followed by the moving appeal, "Have a line, now do, sir ! There's a scud goin' by." When he found fishing in pelting rain failed to rouse us to action, he turned in despair

to giving us news of the weather : " It's lessenin', the clouds is breakin', the wind's risin'. We'll have a fine day yet ; there's a bit o' blue now." And with that news even the heroine of *Cœur de Femme* was left incontinently to her sad fate.

After luncheon it had cleared in earnest. The clouds were rolling up their gray and white curtains, and the face of a melting summer noon came from behind them. On deck the breath of the wet, moist earth, laden with the vigour of an unbreathed sweetness, swept the nostrils ; every bush and tree seemed to produce its orchestra ; the thrushes and blackbirds were singing as if to burst their throats with gladness. The river, in a twinkling, had become a bed of radiance ; it lapped and gurgled now like some happy conscious creature. Fairy finned creatures came out of the river depths to take a look at the sun ; and upon the meadows some of those aerial shapes seemed to have found wings of gossamer texture with which to dance from flower to flower.

It was altogether so cheerful an earth that we made up our minds to go out in our turn and have some fun with it. First we descended upon the inn. It was as cosy a tavern as the eye could rest on. A man at the threshold bade us welcome with the tact of an innkeeper who was born with a talent for his

trade. He had asked civilly how the "wet" had treated us ; he was glad—seemingly as glad as if he had been a brother—that we had a dry boat ; so many leaked and made trouble ; and would we step within and sit a bit ?

The little inn sitting-room was parlour and tap-room in one ; its chairs opened friendly arms ; bits of old silver gleamed on the mantelpiece ; and low settles, oak cupboards, and tables of antique make, were suggestive of the dead and gone figures that had peopled the cosy room. In the old posting days the "Angel Inn" had been a favourite coaching station. Past its doors ran the old high-road from Norwich to Yarmouth. Before the Norwich coach crossed the bridge, the horses were changed from yonder "Angel" stables, and passengers and guard came into this low room for beer and a restful stretching of cramped legs. It is no discredit to the attractions of our genial host's conversational abilities to admit that no sooner had the above historical fact been stated than my mind took a clean jump from the fabulous tales of the fish still to be caught and the wild-duck to be shot in these days of our Lord the eighteen hundred and nineties, to the days of long-flown centuries, when this inn or its predecessors must have seen sights that would make even the most elaborate Shakespearian revival a tame

show. Some of the historical rehearsals in costume, unconsciously played beneath these low eaves—what would not modern historians give to have seen one of these groups and have heard their talk? Some of the Vatican secrets were doubtless whispered here by the Benedictines or the Gray Friars who, for centuries, were busy plying their ecclesiastical trade in the monasteries of Yarmouth and Norwich. I should have liked uncommonly to have listened to some of the Huguenots' tales, as they clustered hereabouts; and of the refugee artisans from over the sea, shivering still from their fright at the Medici murders,—looking over their shoulders, perchance, furtively, as they spread their hands to the flames, in a horror of apprehension lest even here that cruel Italian arm should have power to seize them.

With my mind still on murders, did any betraying lip breathe the dismal news, I wonder, here in this peaceful tavern, that down yonder at Yarmouth, in one of the upper rooms of a certain fine Elizabethan mansion, Cromwell and his officers had sat together of an evening, and given the word for Charles to die? The talk in the quiet room, I found, when I came back to it, was still of killing. Fabulous were the tales the innkeeper was telling of the game to be found along Acle Marsh, in its pulks

and pools ; but the true sportsmen, we were told, came in the autumn or during the winter, long after the summer's "pleasurin'" was over. The summer cruisers were indeed spoken of civilly, but their pretence at playing the sportsman was dismissed with that indifference which is the hardest cross the amateur has to bear.

Some amateur fishermen came in presently, followed by a group of yachtsmen. The fishermen showed some diminutive pike, with a great flourish of pride. The publican, with the facile hypocrisy of talented keepers of taverns all the world over, praised the "catches" loudly, and even went to the length of dangling them before our eyes. The sons of Nimrod toasted their luck with a liberal tipping of beer-mugs. As their voices rose with the tide of their spirits, we betook ourselves to the high-road. The latter, indeed, had been a dangerous provocative from the beginning of our coming to Acle, for we knew that the town and a fine old church lay along its route. But the afternoon was waning. This was also true of our patience. Neither we nor the skipper Cross had had news of our party of deserters. We knew no more than he, when to look for their coming. If they were true to their promise, they were due within the hour. Upon us had descended the fate

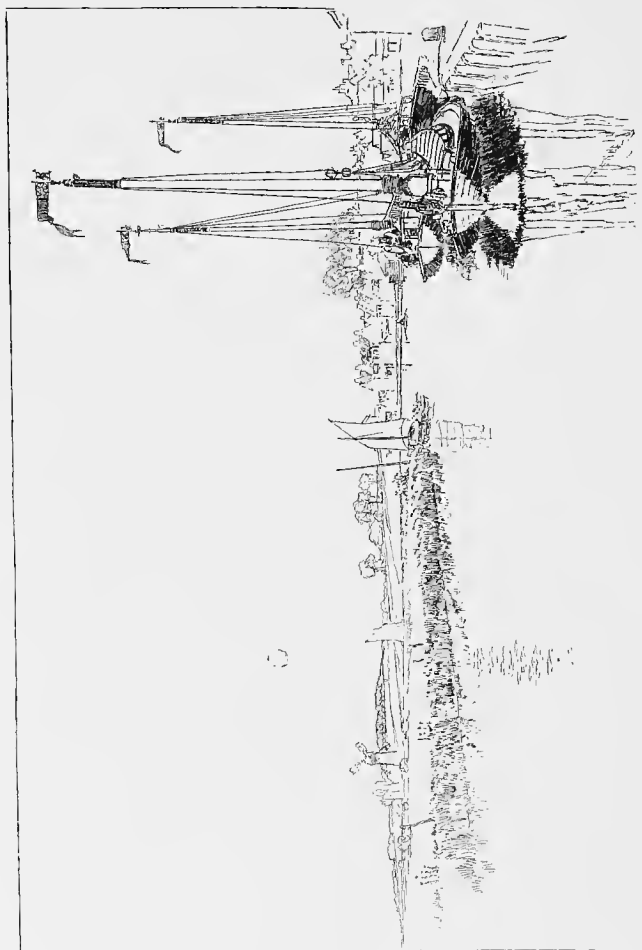
of the stay-at-home. We could twiddle our thumbs, and must sit by a river-bank, as we waited, while the wanderers were abroad, gaily riding the high seas of adventure.

In less than an hour Cross had brought us news of them. There were two telegrams, and ours gave the following brief summary: Norwich was immense (the wording betrayed Renard's loose dealing with language); to-day there was an installation of a bishop, to-morrow there was a garden-party. We were bidden to come up for both, and at once. If we failed to rejoin them, they would return to-morrow evening.

"They may come when they please. They may go on garden-partying to all eternity, they may——"

Hoping to stay the torrent of wrath I knew was about to break forth—had it ever occurred to the impatient gentleman, I asked, that these people were really not bound to consider us at all? We were at best but chance acquaintances to all but Renard, and he was their guest. Even when in anger, a man must stand by his colours; he has announced himself to be the logical animal, and to reason, therefore, he must lower his flag, whatever the private mood. Two decisions were therefore quickly arrived at. One had been a foregone conclusion from the very moment of

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our meeting with Violet Belmore and with Renard ; it was that we should await our friends' coming until to-morrow ; and the other, since dinner was cooking, and the smell of paraffin was strong in our nostrils, that we should take a row out upon the river.

We were in the *Pride*, and were rowing under the stone arches of the bridge in a trice. The spectacle that met our eyes the other side of the bridge would have gone far to soothe disappointment of sharper tooth than our late one. The sky was full of light. The west, a large rose of brightest yellow, had the sun itself for a burning centre. Against the molten gold of this effulgent background all the objects in the immediate foreground were jet black. A wind-mill, set far out upon the bank, was as dark as if under the shadow of the trees behind it ; between the blackened slits of its wide arms, the yellow light, lined and barred, streamed in glittering glory. The hulls of two wherries beyond the mill, the figures of some men on their decks, and the full sails, were all as black as ink. A single yacht, leaning-to, with its sails almost flat upon the water, alone came in for a share of the celestial illumination ; its sail was as a heavenly garment, dazzling in its white brightness. This radiant spectacle lasted for a good half-hour. When the fiery glow began to wane in the west,

the mountains of clouds were seen to have melted away. A vaporous gauze had replaced those shining hills of flame. Beneath this illumined veil lay a blonde earth, of suave feature. All the bright lights were merged into the universal softness ; one object after another—yachts, sails, windmills, gabled-roof—were in turn touched and softened, till the whole outlook was fused into one vast harmonious glow.

Such a transformation scene was entertainment enough, one might have thought, for one evening ; but our skipper voted it, at best, a dull performance. From the bridge he gave the show, and our rigid figures seated in the boat beneath him, a single glance. “Dinner’s been ready this half-hour, sir.” The tone, though entirely civil, spoke as eloquently as a newspaper column of adverse criticism, when the work criticised is our friend’s, and not our own. Why were townspeople so given to waste time in looking at sights as commonplace as a setting or a rising sun ? was the note of Davy’s unspoken contempt. It was that scorn of his class for all such aspects of nature as confirm the recent theory that adoration of natural beauty is the sign of a decadent rather than of a robust or a primitive taste. Those who live close to nature see as little in it to be admired as does, as a rule, the family of a genius, before the

world has told them what a marvel has sprung from their midst. But even in men and women of aesthetic mould, how many still see nature chiefly through the windows of literature? Even the poets are not always to be trusted; they either see too much or too little—for people are quite as apt to make fools of themselves when adoring nature as when they worship each other; few can kneel and yet preserve their dignity. How many poets apostrophise nature as Frenchmen do their women, with a nauseating sentimentality that robs expression of the ring of an honest fervour? It is pretty well agreed, I presume, that of all the poets Wordsworth can walk up to a mountain and be as little dismayed by its greatness as any man, while he can be trusted to deal justly with its grandeur.

We turned in early again that evening. The gauzy veil the sky had worn at sundown had been dropped earthwards; a mist lay on the river as thick as a densely-woven shroud. The damp sent us shivering to our cabins.

CHAPTER XIII

THE STORY OF NORWICH

IT was just before luncheon-time, the afternoon of the following day, that a trap drove up to the *Vacuna's* mooring. With a single bound Renard had swung himself from the dog-cart and was helping Lady Marten and Violet to alight. To our inquiries for the missing figure of Sir Reginald, the answer came that he had been called up to London, but would rejoin us at Yarmouth.

The remaining trio had brought down from the town the finest possible spirits, and also, as we shortly told them, a marked air of metropolitan fashion. Renard still wore his *boutonnière* of the asphalt; Lady Marten's smart bonnet was a further rebuke to our vagabond boating flannels; and Violet's gown, though of a gossamer quality, had the crisp perfection which recalls the city's conventional backgrounds.

In spite of the bravery of their splendour, they

professed much joy at getting back to their boat, and, as Renard laughingly added :

“After all, and for all the beauties of a fine old town, there was nothing like a river,” and he sat himself down in a large chair on deck, promptly calling aloud for his *béret*. As he settled his old friend comfortably over his right eye, he told us furthermore, that while they had thought of us often, and flatteringly, during the past four days, they had never failed to classify us with fools and idiots, of course ; but he, for one, was bound to admit, now that once again he had sniffed the quiet perfume of this river-bank, that our obstinacy had a grain of sense in its persistence. There was nothing like a cruise on the Broads—that he had told every one——

“Particularly that pretty barmaid at the inn,” Violet interpolated.

And Renard added, “Particularly the pretty barmaid—such hair as that girl had !”

“And how about Norwich ?” we asked ; “did they like it ?”

“Like it ?” Renard cried. “Ask Miss Vi how she liked Norwich—and particularly the cathedral when she took a whim to go to church in a Gainsborough.”

And Violet flashed back, "Why shouldn't I? Large hats are the rage."

"Of course, why not? And why should you not innocently walk up the close, after service, just to see the afternoon lights on the river, in a primrose gown, and a parasol to match? You knew no one would be about at that hour,—that neither the choir-boys nor the curates, nor the vicars, nor the deans, nor even a bishop or two, would be coming out of the cloisters; nor that the officers, either, would be walking along the embankment. Oh no! of course you made your toilet for the old Tudor houses—solely."

"What nonsense!"

"It's arrant nonsense. I said so. And nothing could be wiser than your deliberate choice of raiment during your stay in Norwich. When Miss Vi," the painter went on, mercilessly, turning to me, "when she chose to walk through the close, or through the streets of the city, or the slums, she wore the laces of an empress and hats of the Parisian Boulevard. And when she was asked to luncheon at the dean's, to meet a brace of bishops, what must she choose but a short skirt and a pair of bicycle leggings!"

"Of course. Weren't we to go for a ride afterwards, out to Thorpe?" Violet retaliated, with a certain measure of heat.

"Of course we were. Besides, imitation is the sincerest flattery. You 'saw' the bishops' gaiters, and went one better. The flattery worked like a charm. She took half the ecclesiastical staff of Norwich out with her, whenever she mounted a bike. On the whole, our descent upon Norwich was a success. Most of the cathedral body, I regret to say, are now in a bad way. They all have stiff necks from overcraning. Every officer, to a man, is in the hospital from increased heart action. If you want to enter a city with a conqueror, my dear lady, you follow in the train of Miss Violet de Courcey Belmore. Napoleon's entrances were failures—in comparison."

Now, for chaff, this was all very well. But we had learned no more of Norwich, nor of the installation of a bishop, nor of the sights of an old town than if the talk had been of the adventures of Robinson Crusoe! The merriment was sufficiently contagious, however. During the dinner-hour, and later, when once more we were on deck with the liqueurs and coffee before us, we found that the tide of gaiety carried us well on into the evening.

As if in response to our feasting, the river-station took up the festive note. It was the hour when, all the world over, taverns drive a good trade.

Long after dinner was over the noisy little inn continued to send forth the sound of its prosperity, while the noise that rose from the yachts was neither mystic nor devotional; the twang of guitars and banjos, the jingle of pianos out of tune, and a discordant chorus of after-dinner voices, made an early turning in out of the question. No sooner were the stars fairly out than a rival show of fireworks made the river a blaze of yellow, green, and crimson lights. The yachts and their passengers and crews, the cows lying in the meadows, the furled sails, and the ropes of the rigging—again and again did this world upon the river-bank spring out of the dark, unreal and of an amazing brilliance, to be as swiftly engulfed in the abyss of night.

Gradually the display of fireworks lessened; after a little even the twanging of the guitars ceased, and presently to the noise succeeded the wonted evening quiet along the river and its shores. When one of us presently suggested the wisdom of retiring, Violet gave us a surprise. She felt, she said, a great, an irresistible impulse to play this evening; would it bore us? Renard's answer was to fly out upon the bank towards the wherry, and the rest of us sank back in our seats, full of happy expectation. How often, during the past week, had we begged this boon of the

girl. But the answer had always been the same, unless the spirit of playing was upon her, her performance would result in giving us neither profit nor pleasure. Now, so strange is the heart of woman, she proffered, almost apologetically, that which we had craved and for which we had pled with tiresome iteration.

In the darkness, on Renard's quick return, we could see her bending over her instrument. It was very much out of tune, she told us, what with the damp of the river and its long rest. For a time there was only the discordant squealing of the reluctant catgut, as she tested the notes, and tightened the loosened strings. After a little while the instrument was in tune. She then stepped out upon the open space we had made for her on deck. Placing her violin beneath her chin, her bow swept the strings, broadly, firmly; then came a brief preluding of chords, an airy, birdlike arpeggio, a trill or two, and then there sang out to the night and to our expectant ears a liquid cadenza; it was the opening serenade of the "*Cavalleria Rusticana*."

Violet's touch was pure and strong, and her bowing firm and even; but who is critic in such an hour? We were hearing this song of love, with its minor notes of a passion in distress, its

quivering rests, and its sensuous crescendos, as it should be heard—under the dome of an open sky, with the mauve shadows of the night masked in dusky companies; with the cool air on one's cheek, and with nature listening silently to the serenader's secret. Against the darkness Violet's outlines, her airy draperies, and the movement of her body, as it swayed in answer to the rhythm of the music, were mistily defined; her vibrant touch upon the strings was the more effective; the clear, pure tone her instrument emitted seemed the voice of the rich forces of life enshrined in the dimly lit, mysterious shape.

Some figures from along the shore or the yachts had crept near to our boat; two others had crawled softly from our own forward hatchway; Davy and Grimes had slid their bodies along the cabin deck, and were lying there, with their hands upholding their chins.

"Circe and her swine," Renard whispered.

All of us were in a more or less idyllic stupor, vaguely conscious that one of the perfect moments of life had come. Moments that have a satisfactory, harmonious completeness are rare. Violet herself appeared to realise the symphonic beauty that made this rendering of Mascagni's masterpiece unique;

for, beyond her willingness to repeat the aria, she would play no more. She ran her fingers over the strings, pricking a staccato, and came to a final rest in two deep, full chords. She was soon "putting her violin to bed," and added, that we had better, all of us, follow the example her instrument was setting us.

Not yet, we pleaded; she must give our pulses time to come to their normal beat. For a little we sat in silence. Renard, during Violet's playing, had been as still as if in a trance; he was now beginning to be restive. His cigarette went out; his hands were twitching with a certain nervous force at his moustache ends, and there was a significant creaking of his wicker chair. When he finally broke forth into speech, he seemed to be talking rather to the night than to us.

"How those Italians understand their human instrument! What a lot of all of you" (and his gesture swept the sky and the shadowy earth line), "of your mystery, your sweetness, your strength, they put into their notes. One feels the truth of their music when one hears it close to nature—or," he added softly, "to the woman one loves." Then he sank back into his chair, and the stillness was upon us once more. But his demon was beginning to work its spell; the tumult of sensation and emotion would

soon break forth ; we should presently be in for one of his rare monologues. We had not long to wait. I could see him turning, as he suddenly sat upright, towards Violet, and he began to gesticulate—a sure sign that a freshet of speed was to follow.

“I say, Miss Vi, think what it would be to go up to a city—to have entered Norwich, for instance—to the rousing notes of some fine music, to the Tannhäuser March, for instance, walking in step to it, and to have seen, as the trumpets rang out, right before one, Norwich Castle ! What a fine surprise it would be, to be sure, to find things popping up like that. Instead of listening to music in a hothouse, under gas chandeliers, with paper castles for scenery, think of stopping at some grand old historic site, and a big orchestra blazing away, somewhere, with the right tune in its brass tubes. Instead, we travel thousands of miles to see an old town, and the minute we set foot in it our minds are bent on luggage and getting cabs. What a mess we’ve managed to make of all the best things in life. There’s Norwich now—But what a fool I am ! I shall go on talking all night if I once begin.”

“Go on !” was cried out to him, in chorus.

“Yes, tell them—tell us about Norwich,” said Violet. “You make it all so wonderful.”

“How about Lady Marten?”

From Lady Marten’s chair there came the consenting answer of a dead silence. She was fast asleep.

“That’s what you’ll all be,” laughed Renard, “before I have done. Well, Norwich, as I was going to announce, is like a woman with a charm. One should go up to her to the sound of slow music. Just what makes the charm, you cannot define; you lose yourself in a labyrinth of conjecture. No sooner had I looked on Norwich than I was her lover—yes, in spite of worrying after bags and cabs. First of all, as you left the station, there stood the Castle, with its notched teeth standing out against the sky. The great mass is planted on a low hill, and makes you believe in it at once as something genuine, as a real warrior who has survived his history. Now if anything can put a quizzical modern in touch with an old town, it is a great gray castle, mounted high, springing from the very heart of things. And that is what Norwich Castle does for Norwich.

“Well, you go to the books, to the histories, guide-books, and all the others, and you find your emotion about that Castle waxing faint. Your enthusiasm will be frozen under a mass of dates, of facts, and of conjectures. But go up to one of

the old watch-towers; sit there a while, alone, if possible, and do a little thinking on your own account. You'll need a few facts, as a basis. But your imagination will have the freer rein if you don't bother too much about archaeology. What I see—what I saw, one afternoon—I sat astride one of the big teeth—was a long procession of men, the fighters, kings, priests, savages, sailors, soldiers, that had battered themselves against the stone walls of the old fortress. What is such a building as Norwich Castle but an epic of man's courage? The song that we can't hear is the long litany—the chant of man's desires, his lust for power,—man's belief in himself, that has sung itself hoarse on such watch-towers, and whose syren voice has carried men from over the seas to come to their grave in a moat. The history of Norwich Castle—of Norwich Town, for that matter—is the history of the spirit of man. What matter if the spirit works brutally in the barbarian, in the Iceni, for instance, the first settlers of that old hill? or if it work intelligently in the masterful Roman, or adventurously in the Dane, or cannily through the Norman? They were all men, testing their strength with other men. Their long or short possession of such a hill as that was only a question of the degree of their power—their phase of

development, as we call it now. Who is it who said, 'there is a crack in everything God has made'? Well, but for that crack the battle of life would have been settled long ago. There was a crack in the Druids, or they would have held on to the hill, and another in the Romans; and there was still another in the Danes. The Normans patched up their crack with the cement the Church uses, and their reign in the land has been long.

"But what one chiefly sees through a lancet window on an old tower, are the flying pictures, painted in blood, against the sky.

"Wouldn't you like to have seen those Roman legions flying up the hill with their helmets and shields glittering in the sun, and to have heard the answer to the fury of their charge ringing out from behind the Druid fortress, as the Iceni sent their bronze-tipped weapons whistling down upon their foe? By the great Bacchus! what a mighty swinging of short-swords, what a whizzing of arrows in the air, what a clashing of armour, and what a river of blood to have looked upon!"

Renard paused, after that climax, and walked a bit up and down the deck. He lit a cigar and sat down again. Not many minutes elapsed before he broke out again.

“That wonderful, persistent, unconquerable spirit of man,” he continued, as if musing aloud. “What inward revolt, what poetic flight of thought, or what madness for adventure, was it sent those other conquerors, the Danes, after the Romans up the hill? What Columbus was it who whispered to the Dane the catching word of a new world? Who was the Drake who manned the ships, the painted ships—that wherry of yours is wearing the old Norse colours—and who was the northern Nelson who led those old Danes into battle?”

“They could ride in their painted ships within sight of the Castle in those days—the sea came up as far as Reedham, it seems. There was a set of pirates for you, with a vengeance!”

“What a strange crew, and how strangely armoured! When first they came, they wore only a leathern neck-piece and shin-pieces as leggings. Then later, after they had copied the Norwegian war costume, they had a flowing tunic and a sugar-loaf helmet over their leathern outfit. Their sagas give you the earlier picture.

“Well, the pirates made a good thing of their venture. They had come to stay. So they named their new country after themselves. Norwich is Norse.

"When the Normans came, they found the country pretty full, what with Angles and Danes and some of the old Romans, who must have managed to retain a farm or two. The Castle held out bravely, though; the Conqueror had to make a long fight for it. William anticipated certain later political methods—he was amazingly clever for his day, was William. What a Tammany leader he would have made! Well, once having secured the Castle, he garrisoned it with his own men. No one ever got it away after that. And a century or two later it ceased to have any history in particular. As early as the twelfth century it was a prison. Men have kept on rotting in its dungeons all the time Europe has been settling. It's only within a few years that as a gaol the Castle became useless—so useless that those later vandals, the City Council, voted for its destruction. What do you think saved it? A company of dead birds!"

"Nonsense!"

"It's quite true. I met the architect one day I was roosting up there on the parapet, and he told me the whole story.

"It was becoming so old and so useless, since the county gaol had been moved away, that the City Council proposed to do away with the Castle. But

it seemed a pity to let so fine an old bit go to the ground. So he said, if the place could hold living men, he thought it might dead birds. The Council considered his proposition to turn it into a museum, and he got his wish. I startled my architectural friend a little by giving three cheers for the dead birds."

"Well, what next?"

"Great heavens!" cried Renard; and his hands went up to the skies, to which he appealed, "You surely don't want any more?"

"Oh yes, we're going up to Norwich ourselves, shortly, you see: then your lies will find you out."

"How ungrateful of you," said Violet.

"Come, old chap, blaze away! You are in great vein to-night. He understands my chaff, Miss Vi," cried the other smoker. "That was a fine flight of yours, that apostrophe to the spirit of man. It stirred my blood, I must say. Now give us some more. We might as well make a night of it."

"One of us *is* making a night of it. Lady Marten is fast asleep."

"Dear Aunt Harriet! How disturbed she would be if she knew she was sleeping with her bonnet awry!" Violet crept softly towards the figure lying back among the cushions. The lady stirred, gave a

tiny moan of remonstrance at being disturbed, and her head fell back again into its place, after her niece had readjusted the bit of lace that did duty for a head-covering.

We had taken the moment of interruption to change our own postures ; and each of the men now had a tall glass, not as yet empty, close to their chairs.

“ It is just midnight,” Violet remarked, after she had asked Renard to blow a sphere of light, with a puff of his cigar, upon the minute watch set in the bracelet upon her wrist. How lovely it was, she said, upon the river. So entirely still ! And did not we think, at midnight, wherever one faced it, there was always an air blowing, a peculiar air, cool and soft, and restful, at just this hour, when the night seemed to hold the young day, as it were, still asleep in its arms ?

Now, for Violet, this was quite a sentimental outburst ; the midnight was obviously working its spell upon her, as it was, in truth, upon us all. Our making Renard’s talk an excuse for watching out the night was, perhaps, but the merest pretence. The night itself, its starry brilliance, the stir of the insect life, the ripple of music from the dark river, and the shadowy company of the trees, was a world we were in no haste to leave.

For the briefest moment Renard had kept his hand upon the wrist where the tiny watch ticked against a second pulse ; for the briefest moment, as we could not help knowing, Violet's hand lay unresistingly at rest within his clasp ; presently, as Renard broke into speech, with a betraying suddenness, we concluded that this interesting episode had come to an abrupt close.

"Well, where was I? What will you have next?" said Renard incoherently, with a betraying tremor in his voice.

"Tell them about the inn," Violet said softly ; being the heroine of the episode, she was naturally the calmer of the two.

"No—that doesn't come next, chronologically," and Renard rose, shook his tall frame, as if to reconquer his lost poise, felt in his side pocket for a cigar, bit the end, and by the time he was seated, to scratch the match on the sole of his shoe, we knew by the firmness of his tone that he had also, in part, recovered from the thrill of the moment.

"No, the inn belongs to the Tudor period. That comes in later. There were only three or four bits of the Norwich history that interested me, really," he went on, with his cigar now smoking like a

chimney. "Of all the stuff I read,—while Violet was running off, I crammed first and then ran about in search of sensations—well, of all the mass of things the books record, there were three scenes in the historical drama that really 'stirred my blood,'—to quote you, old chappie.

"That Norman mania for building—I must say it fascinates me." He was in full swing once more. "Think of it, just think of the thud of those chisels going on, day after day, month after month, year in and year out. I hardly settled in the country—and a barbarous country, mind, full of enemies and dangers at every turn, to be met, faced, cowed and kept in the leash of fear—what do these fighting Frenchmen determine, these remote brothers of the very Norsemen they subdued? Why, just by way of a fine bravado, they began to build, right and left. Up rose their castles, strong and imposing. The castles were only a bit of good statesmanship. They were fortresses; and the Normans had come to stay. Under the Norman cloak another force had gained a footing, or thought it had. Rome crept in under the warrior's mantle. Mark that persistence of the old Roman! He had gone to pieces as a military man; as a warrior, after the fifth century, the Roman was about as useless as a tin soldier. But the old Roman spirit was alive.

It died as a fighter, only to be regenerated as a priest. The ancient conqueror looked out upon the world through a monk's cowl, saw it was still a fair world, and made up his mind to possess it once more. So the priest arrived along with the Norman. He had sent a sort of advance guard, some monkish missionaries, two or three centuries before, and after taking a look at this fertile, rich little island, he decided to get as much of it for himself as he could. He was industrious, was this mediaeval priest, and he went to work in a hurry. He began enough work in Norwich alone, within the next hundred years, as would have discouraged Hercules himself. How many parish churches do you think there are in Norwich, outside the cathedral precincts? There are forty-four! And most of them are as solid as a rock now, although lots of them have smashed windows, and their doors are closed. But it gives a city a tremendous air, such a lot of churches. At every street corner, nearly, there is a fine tower and a churchyard. Desperately poor some of these look, though, with the old houses toppling around them.

“Well, besides the parish churches, those far-seeing old churchmen built a city for themselves, right there in the heart of the town. First, in the early Conqueror's time, a gay old party, a bishop,

a kind of Wall Street speculator, built a cathedral in penance for his grasping ways elsewhere. You still see his magnificent work in the choir and chapels. Then, after him, monasteries were built—pretty nearly every Norfolk Norman family that had any pride about them built at least one monastery or nunnery—and then the canny monks wanted walls about their cloisters. And the walls went up, and bastions and gates, and all the rest of the middle age ecclesiastical armour was worn.

“Naturally, Norwich hadn’t stood still all this time. It was also busy building. Some fine old walls and watch-towers appeared outside the monks’ city. And there they lived, eyeing each other, the lay city and the episcopal city. Well, the inevitable came to pass, of course. They flew at each other’s throats. There were half a dozen ‘citizens’ riots.’ How men—all strong men, that is—instinctively hate a priest! There were some jolly hand-to-hand encounters between the monks and the Norwich citizens. I should like to have been in one or two of those fights. What fun to have run a priest to earth! Think of scaling those sacred walls, and making a dash—a mad raid—upon the Bishop’s Palace, with its treasures of gold and silver and precious stones. In the end, after Henry VIII.’s

time, the citizens did get a good deal of all that wealth in one way or another.

"Now, of course, all the walls are down, both the city and the cathedral walls. The Episcopal Church, I have often thought, is the Calf of the Scripture. It and the Lion, the Lion of the State, lie down in peace together. But even to-day you can't go into the cathedral close without feeling that it's a separate city, can you, Violet?"

For the second or third time the name slipped Renard's lips; but it came so naturally that even Violet herself seemed unconscious, as women will, when a liberty pleases them, of his violation of the conventionalities. She answered at once, "That is why I loved it—it seemed so far away from everything else."

"You should have seen it the day the bishop was installed. The cathedral close was alive with people—the cloisters were resplendent, with the scarlet and lace of the choir boys. When the procession was massed in the choir, it was a really great show. But we Protestants are generally afraid of colour. Our best ceremonials always seem to be in a kind of half mourning.

"Think what gorgeous bits of pageantry that old Norwich has seen. The tournament the city gave

for the Black Prince and his mother would have been goodly to look upon. And the Bishop's Palace, when Queen Elizabeth—the Queen of Vain Virgins—visited it, that would have been an agreeable place to stop at. Ye gods! what a strong old party she was. Between the 16th and the 22nd of a hot August, she listened the first day to six orations, complimenting eight or ten different pageants who passed before her; she dined publicly in the cathedral cloisters; she went a-hunting of tame deer; she witnessed several wrestling matches; and on a Monday a gilded coach came tearing up to the bishop's gates, with horses gotten up *à la Pegasus*, stuck all over with wings, with a boy doing the Mercury act, bare back, only instead of his trident he carried a long written speech. That finished her. She left the city and never returned. Norwich had talked her to death.

“By the way, the Boleyns came from Norwich, were *nouveaux riches*. It appears Elizabeth, on her mother's side, was desperately poorly off for swell ancestors. Her squires, every one of them, had better quarterings. What does being well born amount to, any way? Half the great ones who have turned the world upside down have had to stop talking about their parents.

“There’s one thing, however, I do like. When a swell sets up to be an out and out grandee, and can prove his right to play the part, I like him to fill the *rôle* well. There is a tale told about one of the Dukes of Norfolk that took my fancy. The dukes had a shabby palace in Norwich for several centuries. Then in 1600 they became ambitious. A palace was begun on such a scale of splendour that the masons were kept busy for fifty years or more ; its glory was such that the very fire shovels were of silver. Everything else was up to those shovels. Three coaches were sent out among the Norwich ladies every afternoon to bring them up for a dance in the great ballroom. And in the gardens along the river, with their walks forty feet wide, the ducal owner of all this splendour happened to think one day of a queen he would like to marry, so he sent a missive off to Mary—she of Scotland, and the many husbands. And then he, or his ancestors, went off in a huff another fine day, because the mayor forbade his entering the town to the sound of his own trumpets. There’s a swell for you. He knew his trade. I take off my cap to the gentlemen.

“Well, there’s a lot more. But I’ve nearly finished my tale. The other day—yesterday, in fact—as I was walking about the dear old city, I looked

about me and I tried to see all that is left of these wars and pageants, and what Norwich looks like in its green old age. Well, green is the right word. Some one once christened it 'the city of gardens.' They are all there, blooming away. What have roses to do with decay? And the churches are still in the town, although many of them are only poor relations. There are still dark and grimy old alleys—'yards' they call them—with lots of the dirt the middle ages forgot to take away with them. Fascinating—those old streets, with their winding ways, their gray faces, and latticed windows for eyes. There are a lot of old faces looking out through those slits, jolly survivors of the Elizabethan days. But you should see the girls out on the streets of the broader thoroughfares. There is a proof of heredity for you. Norwich is as full of pretty girls, with the Dane's blonde mane and Norman's blue eyes, as it is of flowers. The Norman and the Dane are still there. They make it uncommonly lively too. There's more life and 'go' in Norwich than any English town I know. Next to the pretty women I liked the sheep. Wait till you see the cattle market there of a Saturday. Those hoofs have been clicking their castanets on the Norwich pavements ever since Canute's time——"

Renard paused, and we thought he had done. But he said, as he rose, with a stretch of his arms, as he looked toward the east—

“The best of the whole place, after all, was the river. There was a bench down at the crumbling watch-tower, at the old Water-Gate. It was gay there by day. Soldiers passed and repassed along the opposite bank, taking their constitutional. And stunning bits of colour their coats sent into the river. A primitive craft did duty for the bishop’s stately old barge, and this raft was my pontoon bridge—I threw it over the stream of the past.”

He had barely finished the words when an exclamation from Violet startled us all.

“What is that?” and she waved her hand towards the east.

The gray face of the new day was peeping at us over the edges of the marsh.

“That, dear lady, is the little surprise I have been working up to—it is the dawn!”

“We must never let Aunt Harriet know,” cried Violet, with genuine alarm. “She would never forgive me, if she knew I had let her——”

“Make a night of it!”

Their figures, stealing away under the shelter of what was left of the night, as they led Lady Marten

along the shore to their wherry, were, in a way, a part of the birth of the new day. With them disappeared the last vestige of a shadow. As we turned in, the sky was offering us a vast pink rose through our portholes.



STOKESBY

CHAPTER XIV

DOWN TO YARMOUTH

IT took us the following day and night to recover. What was left of the day, after we had exhausted our capacity for sleep, was barely worth considering. The evening hours were chiefly devoted to planning our sail to the sea. As the flats near Yarmouth were given to tricky ways with the wind, and there was the possible danger of no breeze whatever, and a long day of quanting, we separated early, with the mutual promise of a six o'clock start.

Davy kept us strictly to our promise ; he had us up and away so early the next morning that the cows were still at rest in the meadows. The inn shutters were as tightly closed as were the yachts' awnings. The windows on board Cross's wherry, however, were still thickly curtained. Not a sign of a reveller was discernible ; we alone had kept good our engagement with the dawn. We might have made a meal of our

boastful pride if we chose, for we should have no other for a good hour, at least. The wind was already abroad upon the meadows, and was blowing in the right quarter. With Yarmouth twelve miles off, and the dreaded prospect ahead of several hours' quanting if the breeze should fall away, the gnawing of an early morning hunger affected Davy as little as an appeal to a wooden idol. The getting of his boat "tidily" through Acle Bridge; re-stepping the mast once we were on the lower side of its stone arch; hoisting his sails; the *Vacuna's* swinging into the channel; and our subsequent swift running before the wind,—these were acts and events which made our skipper sublimely indifferent to a break-fastless state. We were of less heroic mould; coffee and rolls at seven in the morning assume an importance out of proportion to the part they play in the rest of one's day. We turned a cool eye on the fair earth, and, wrapped in our cloaks, sat on deck, hugging the grievance of our hunger. Stokesby would be more beautiful to look upon than in the early morning, for there our breakfast was promised us.

No town dweller, I presume, who is a lover of nature, ever remains wholly insensible to the charms of a sleepy earth throwing off its night mists. Acle

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Marsh, just below the bridge, stretched its breadth to the horizon with such an alluring morning freshness as to stir even our spiritless state. The cows were walking about in search of their meal; long lines defiled slowly between the few, widely scattered trees and the windmills.

“Stokesby’s round that ’ere reach. We’ll be layin’-to in a jiffy. But it do seem a shame to lose such a wind, it do!” was Davy’s plaint as, at last, the roofs of the village began to define themselves through the trees. Stokesby was set close to the river, upon a low and fertile marsh. A windmill beckoned us onward through a light ambuscade of trees, and close beside this ambuscade we dropped our anchor. The time of our laying-to was brief. Davy made the quickest time on record in cooking a breakfast on a paraffin stove. Its customary reluctance to burn yielded to a zeal that, as its auxiliary, had Grimes’ young lungs for bellows. “This ain’t no time to be waitin’ on a slow fire, it ain’t. Some men does their courtin’ that way; but this ain’t no time to show patience, an’ fires is like maids: if you speak to ’em in the right way, you’ll have your wish with ’em. Grimes, my lad, keep on a-blowin’. It’s beginnin’ to heat; an’ I’ll lay your table for you.”

These admonitions and reflections were scattered broadcast to poop, deck, and hatchway. Davy flung himself about with a reckless expenditure of both his stores of philosophy and energy. He had the table laid, and had directed our attention to the "shipshape" manner of its adornment; the coffee miraculously came to a boil and was served, full and minute directions being given as to the correct making of the same "when a man's pressed for his time"; and eggs and toast were ready within the half-hour hitherto devoted to the conscientious comparison of the river-side ale and the beer aboard our own boat.

In an incredibly short half-hour our anchor was up, and we were heading down stream. Once under way, Davy's impatience to be off was easily understood. We had a free wind, we were under full canvas, with dry decks, and were fairly flying through the water. The river was beginning already to widen appreciably, and every mile we made took us farther away from the inland country and into the marshy wastes of a river scenery that was soon to end in sandy beaches. Whether or not it was wholly due to a comfortable, breakfasted state, or a little to the gaiety of the morning, it is certain our spirits took a turn for the better after leaving Stokesby. We had forgotten our grudge against the morning, and paid it a

number of handsome compliments. There was still an exhilarating, early-day freshness abroad, and the river shot sparkling glances to the shore, as it ran its course merrily and freely. From the beginning there had been nothing commonplace about the Bure. In its approaches to the sea it continued to prove its talent for making a little river as interesting as a big one. There was a kind of poetic reluctance, a womanly sort of hesitation, in its manner of going forth to the sea. From a wide, broadening reach, where the grasses and marshes were brutally telling the little river how short was its span of flowing life, it would run into a cosy shelter of growing timber, and press the green feet of the meadow grass, as if to catch its breath there, after its breakneck gallop past the marshes. Beneath such banks its waters ran with an agreeable languor ; there was a hint of a genuine epicureanism in its leisurely gait. It was in such pleasant stretches that the river gave you clearly to understand that long ago it had made up its liquid mind that, while the excitements of going to sea were all very well, there was a deal of content and enjoyment to be had between two meadow-banks. The cool of these timbered valleys ; the scent of the new-mown hay ; that delightful feminine shiver of the grasses as our craft ran in among them ; and then the rare music

of the reeds that that old Greek, a god some called him, Pan, was able to extract, summer after summer, out of these commonplace stalks—oh, it was quite certain that the river Bure knew when it was well off. It had not as yet caught the modern fever from the voyagers it helped onwards—that fever of a mad unrest, with its craze for novelty at any cost. The thrushes and the blackbirds sang songs that made a wise little river content to lie flat on its back and gaze up to the sky.

The river would flow thus, singing away softly to a poplar or two ; and then the pastoral aspect would change to the ruder epic of storm-swept branches, and the vast marshes that once were the sea's own level.

It was just below Ranham, a scattered village with a clump of trees, a windmill, and a house or two as a foreground to its roof-clusters farther on, that we began to lose our interest in the river. For the wind, having dropped away a point or two, was giving us a deal of worry. Reefs were shaken out, and every stitch of canvas was spread. The wind had fallen to a light breeze, and even that came fitfully, puffily. "It'll hold, though, sir, I think," was Davy's reassuring conviction, as he took a comprehensive squint at the sky, the lightly blowing grasses, the river, and the sails coming up stream. "No quantin'

this trip. But Cross,—Lord! won't he catch it! The wind 'll be as dead as flat ale by the time he's steppin' his mast this side of Acle Bridge." The prospect of his friend Cross's coming miseries appeared to fill Davy with a certain glee. We, from our cushions, presented no higher lesson in generosity. To think of our friends quanting dully through this dreary bit of earth, under the hot noon sun, while we were lolling at our ease in some cosy hotel overlooking the Yarmouth beaches, filled us with an unlovely, but very warming, sense of satisfaction. Was our pluck in early rising, forsooth, and our fortitude in breasting a high wind for an hour or more, in a breakfastless condition, to go unrewarded? We owed it to ourselves to see to it that the altar of our self-sacrifice was well furnished with the illuminating tapers of self-appreciation. Self-sacrifice, being a virtue, should keep on hand a supply of such altar-lights; for in nine cases out of ten it may look about in vain for any other recognition of its kind offices.

Light as the breeze was, it bore us onward. We continued to survey the landscape with a feeling of unmixed gratification at being able to leave so much of it behind us. The cows' were the only eyes that were fixed upon the fields with admiration; their

gluttonous feeding was a proof of the quality of the salt seasoning their day's meal. As we bore down towards the river-mouth, the banks grew muddy; the river itself lost its blue, and turned a dull yellow. The waters ran over shallows, and the narrowness of the channel brought the other sails close to our gunwales. As we swept lightly along, we passed as many wherries, yachts, yawls, and sailing-boats as we had seen at any time along the river. Those going up stream, working against the tide, were busy tacking, our fellow-travellers' sails hanging as limp as our own, with just enough breeze filling them to allow of their creeping along. The slowness of our speed Davy, as usual, found a great provocative of speech. To every sail going up stream he flung out a greeting. His approach to his native town formed the chief theme of his salutation, while the coming meeting with the wife of his bosom was an event apparently not wholly unmixed with awe.

"Any news down Yarmouth way?" our skipper sang out to a scarlet-faced wherryman.

"None whatever."

"Heard any news of Polly Ann, or Caister Road?"

"Wasn't home this trip."

"He's always like that," commented Davy, as the

wherryman slipped by on his dingy craft. "Ain't no more feelin' than a board. Some men is like that, it's their natur'. Here's one that's got a heart inside o' him, he have. I say, James, been down our way lately?"

The man he had accosted was standing at the helm of a heavily loaded wherry. He looked up quickly and nodded as briskly as he sang out, with a laugh and a blinking of the eye that was meant for a wink, "I seen her, Cross. She's waitin' for you. She hopes you'll come home quiet this trip."

"Werry silent and quiet I am this trip." And both men laughed with a laugh that shook them.

"They's all well an' the old lady's fine," added the man who had a heart, as he passed us.

"I'll drink a glass to Polly Ann, bless her, if you'll allow, sir," cried Davy. And leaving the tiller to our guidance, he was across the deck and down the hatchway with a single spring.

This was the beginning of innumerable toasts to the home joys awaiting our skipper. The beauties of Yarmouth and the virtues of Polly Ann divided the honour of his libations.

"Yes, sir, it's Yarmouth town we'll see inside of an hour or two. Her chimbleys and church-spires'll be lookin' out for us. Lord! but the years they've

been my beacon lights, with Polly Ann waitin' along with 'em. Yarmouth's a great town, few finer. An' the Rows, they're a great show if you're not used to 'em ; an' so is the herrin'-quays. Haul in the main, my lad ; an' when you've tied your sheet, bring me a glass. I'll drink to Polly Ann, bless her ! Here's to Polly Ann !"

Long and frequent were the toasts to Polly Ann as nearer and nearer drew Yarmouth town. Out of the dull wastes of the marshes the dim, dusky mass that lay along the southern horizon slowly resolved itself into the outlines of a city. There were the signs of its movement and life abroad upon the river, long before we swept its quays. Grammar-school boys, with caps and wide Eton collars, trooped along the low, rising shore ; soldiers were lounging beneath the trees ; and the river was alive with shipping, with floating flags, and the pennants of yachts. A dune to the left was Caister Beach ; and beyond were some willows and a herd of cattle beneath them, over the backs of which rose the roofs and chimneys of the still distant town. These roofs grew nearer and nearer, an ebb-tide sweeping us along with a rush now we were fairly in the current of the channel. There was a vast deal of bustle on board. Grimes was flying about from the ropes to the anchor,

and Davy was at the tiller one moment, and shoving the jib boom into place with his foot the next. Making Yarmouth quays was no easy matter, as we soon saw. The boats were as thick as cabs in a London thoroughfare ; there was an ugly channel to be mindful of at every turning, and the wind was clearly dying away. Had it not been for the tide with its ebb-rush we might have been quanting. As it was, we swept along with a spurt that sent wondering glances towards us ; and if ever our skipper had a moment of gratified pride, it was when we were making Yarmouth harbour.

“ Ha ! ha ! There’s not many could have kept her as straight on her course. How’s this, Grinnell, my lad ? How does we look riding the tide ? ” he cried in his joy to some friends in a flat-boat. And the men from the boat had nothing but praise on their lips.

A different song greeted our ears as we came nearer to the great dockyards. “ Here, you ! Look out, will you ? That’s no way to be rushin’ down stream. I’ll send the police arter you ! ” growled the skipper of a schooner who was lumbering along under a load of timber and whose gunwale we had all but grazed.

“ Catch us, an’ then we’ll wait your biddin’ ! ” was Davy’s exultant retort. “ Here, you Grimes, get your ropes ready. We’ll be runnin’ in in a jiffy now.”

In a jiffy, indeed, were we dropping sail ; Grimes was slinging a great coil of rope to no one in particular, as it seemed to us. We were running alongside an empty barge, the rope was still swinging in mid air, and Davy was shouting ; he was also openly swearing as he cried, " In the ——'s name, ain't there no one to give us a turn ? " From behind a shed on the river wharf a sailor's cap appeared, as if in response to our skipper's cry of distress. He had caught the rope with a masterly swiftness and had whirled the loop about a mooring post.

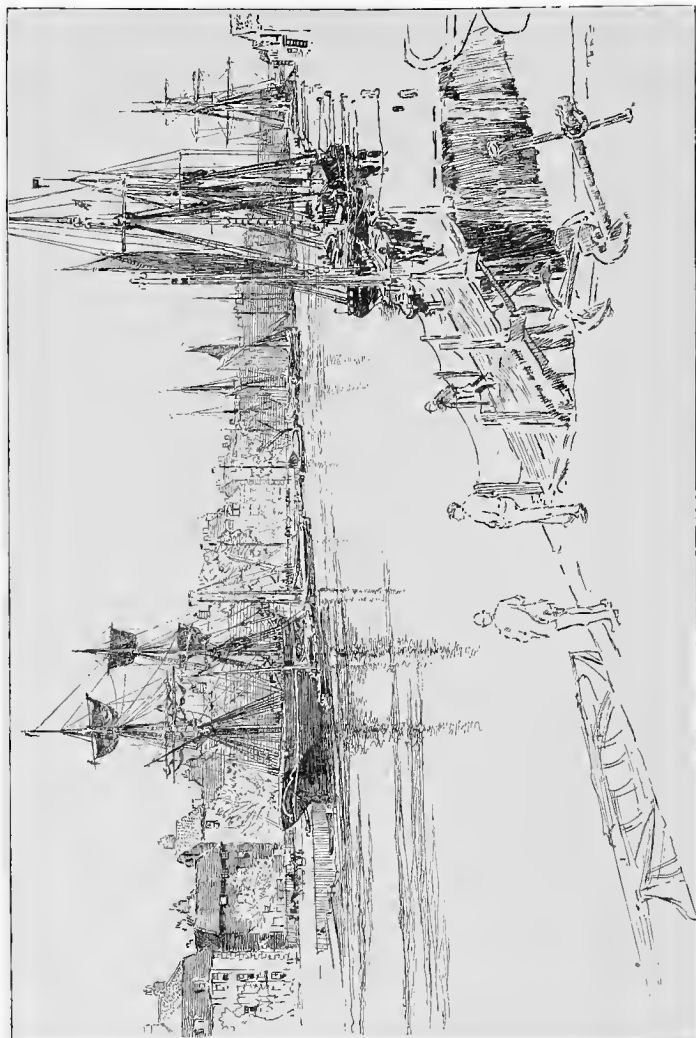
Slowly yet surely the *Vacuna* answered to this grip of the shore. She gave a single spurt forward, then a backward plunge. Davy had flung another rope, our friendly sailor had caught it ; and thus we were made fast to the Yarmouth wharves.

CHAPTER XV

YARMOUTH QUAYS AND BEACHES

No sooner was our boat made fast than Davy had put the accommodating sailor in charge of her. Our entrance into Yarmouth was to be of an imposing nautical character. The suggestion that a cab should be called was met with a civil but firm remonstrance. So commonplace a proceeding would have greatly interfered with the more ceremonious entry planned by our skipper. In brisk, seamanlike fashion he had begun a swift lacing together of bags and port-manteaux ; he shouldered the load as only a sailor handles luggage : across his breast were slung two or three of the smaller pieces, while his back was reserved for the heavier weight of the Gladstones. Grimes was harnessed in similar fashion, with both hands full to balance the load.

The little procession then began its descent upon the city. It seemed a pity, in view of as gallant a



YARMOUTH QUAYS

marine escort, that the Yarmouth quays were so empty. Of ships and boats there were enough to start half a dozen cities in a good maritime business. But the great vessels whose masts made a forest of bare timber against the sky were as devoid of moving life as if they had been abandoned on the high seas. The streets beneath the tall and short houses, whose varied roofs and diversified façades made an agreeable contrast to the trimness of ship's rigging, were as quiet as the wharves ; our echoing footsteps brought not a single inquiring eye to doors or windows. That the business of living was carried on behind the brick and wooden-faced dwellings was proclaimed by any number of curtains fluttering to the breeze.

In spite of this stillness, the streets of Yarmouth were pleasant ones to tread. There are cities which come forward to greet one, as certain people do, with a hearty, welcoming air. The Yarmouth houses were bright and gay, as if they knew what was expected of them. Here were ships coming in from all quarters of the globe : why not greet them with a festive smile ? So the houses, not to be outdone by the colours boasted by the ships' hulks, mounted a brave celestial or roseate hue ; and to set off their complexions the windows were banked with flowers.

Davy meanwhile had been weaving a dark scheme.

On reflection, I have never been quite certain whether this plotting was wholly of Davy's own imagining, or whether the shade of Dickens had not had a conspiring finger in its concoction. It is quite certain the genius of this novelist had been evoking any number of memories as we walked through the silent streets. A ghostly company was hovering about the alleys that ran from this broader thoroughfare into the heart of the town; there were certain shadowy shapes,—a slim outline that was assuredly Little Em'ly's; a rugged, tragic-limned face, that turned out to be Peggotty's; and Steerforth's wraith, waving its helpless arms in air: here was a pleasant and agreeable set of people to be greeting one on the threshold of a great city, to which one had come up from the quiet river nooks with a view to enjoyment. However, there they were, besetting the eyes at every turning. And doubtless, until we had seen the actual beach on which Peggotty's boat-house actually stood, there would be no dispersing these phantoms. Poor, credulous mind of man! that will insist on even its fairy-talk coming true.

Now Davy and Dickens between them contrived to present us with a private view, as it were, of an ideal Dickens's type. Who knows, perhaps the spirit of the great writer, genially suffused with a celestial

warmth of gratitude at our remembrance of him, had fluttered about uneasily until it had found the right Yarmouth inhabitant suited to its beneficent purpose. Davy, doubtless, was merely the human agent chosen to bring about the circumstance.

On and on we had walked until we had come to an open square, on which, along with a number of attractive-looking inns and hotels, stood the imposing belfry of the Town Hall. Before one of the more modest of these inns Davy had stopped short. He mopped his brow, letting the luggage drop meanwhile upon the side walk. Then he said, pantingly—

“It isn’t for me to ask where you’ll be stoppin’, sir. But if I might make so bold, this ere hotel, ‘The Sailor at Anchor,’ is as good a lodgin’ as Yarmouth can show. An’ the landlady, she’s a friend of mine.”

On the instant a large black shape filled the inn’s narrow doorway. Of the sex we were moderately sure, because of the garb and headgear. But the hairy face and the masculine form of feature might otherwise have led to a mistaken conclusion. All manliness of aspect began and ended with the physiognomy. The woman had taken a violent and assertive possession of the rest of the body. The masculine features were framed in two shiny, pomaded

bands of hair; above these bands rose a structure, braids upon braids, puffs, towering and shiny, such as no modern eye had surely ever looked upon. The great shape below this mound was clad in the garb held sacred to the provincial Sunday. The shiny black silk, whose sheen seemed to repeat that of the well-oiled bands, creaked and strained like rigging in a storm. As a finish to the costume, the lady wore a huge hoop-skirt. When she made us a deep and solemn courtesy, we had a moment of agitated wonder: would the upper part of this human structure rise up intact from the steel works, or would the balloon follow the upward movement?

Davy meanwhile was giving the giantess to understand that the best her house offered was to be shown. The landlady nodded; but she uttered not a word. We in our turn were to her as strange a spectacle as if we had been fabulous monsters. Her tongue clave unto the roof of her mouth. As if dazed, she led us along a narrow hall-passage to a still narrower stairway. On the first landing were two doors, and one of these she opened.

Now something came out of that door that sent us flying down the stairs in a hurry. We rolled out upon the side walk, gasping for the fresh air to be had there. Too great a variety of the British tar

had found its temporary home at the "Sailor at Anchor," and this disqualifying fact was quite as well known to the landlady as it was, now, to us. She had followed us out upon the footpath, and at last she faced us with a smile.

"I know'd your ladyship wasn't for the 'Sailor at Hanchor,' ma'am—thank you," she said, in a firm, deep bass. And then she gave Davy the sort of a smile a woman gives a man when she tells him, without the bungling aid of speech, what a particularly conspicuous fool he has made of himself.

"The Royal Harmes is where you should 'ave taken 'em," was the sole lordly reproof she permitted herself to utter.

Davy was never quite the same man after this episode at the inn of his choice. His estimate of us had been a grievous blunder, and his subsequent attitude was that of one never quite sure of himself.

As his first expiatory act he had summoned a cab. "Grimes, my boy, you may go back to the boat," he had said, humbly, to his mate; and they piled the luggage high upon the seats without a word.

The Royal Arms, though not as regal as its name, was a cosy inn. It was florally arrayed with clambering vines and well-filled window-boxes. If one

cannot go up to an unknown city without a certain agreeable fluttering of the pulse, it is equally true that to step into well-appointed rooms, after a fortnight in narrow berths and low cabins, is a sensation replete with a certain voluptuous content. Muscles have a memory of their own, and an easy-chair is better than a theme after a week of lying on the boards of a yacht's deck.

I sank into one as we entered our sitting-room in a sort of ecstatic stupor, conscious only of the luxury of yielding springs; and then, after a moment, came a sense of pleasure in the spaciousness and prettiness of the room, followed by a sneaking conviction that soft carpets and standing lamps, that wide windows and a wide prospect beyond them, afforded greater comforts than cruising about in a small yacht in rivers no wider than a village-street. Yet at the end of a week how one sickens in revolt against that mimicry of home called an inn parlour!

This latter attitude, however, depends largely on the point of view. The splendours of our quarters had deeply affected our skipper. He could not have enough of examining frilled lamp-shades and gaudy china. As he sent his eyes abroad, from the doorway, where he had stood awkwardly fingering his cap, his face had been a playground of expression.

Before his final salute, for a brief instant, his inborn sense of humour carried all else before it. What an ideal emigrant to the States Davy would have been! His stock-in-trade—his love of humour and his talent for speech-making—would early have given him a high rank in American politics.

“Well, sir an’ madam, it’s a palace, an’ that’s the truth. An’ I see you’s at home in it. I didn’t know I had princes aboard with me, an’ that’s a fact. It’ll be a grand thing to tell Polly Ann. You’ll not be wanting me any more, I’m thinking, an’ so I’ll take the Caister Road,” and with a grand flourish of his cap he was gone.

Our inn sitting-room was not of palatial proportions, but it was an excellent place from which to look forth upon the two oceans that spread themselves out beneath our windows. The northern ocean we had expected to see. Geographically, we may be said to have been brought up to it. But that sea of people, the swaying, restless, ceaselessly moving mass swarming over the great quays, and blackening the yellow beaches till scarce a grain of sand was to be seen: upon no such outlook had we counted. The quiet of the shipping quays on the other side of the town was now explained. Not alone Yarmouth, but the county of Norfolk and the city of London itself, had sent

their quota to swell the crowds peopling the beaches of this Northern Margate.

Great as it was, it was an orderly crowd. Decorum was written all over these thousands of conforming



YARMOUTH BEACH

English backs. We had no need of an interpreter to tell us this was a Protestant army of holiday-makers, abroad on Protestant quays and sands. Here was no light-hearted Catholic gaiety such as possesses those sons of Rome who, having shriven their souls at early mass, are ripe for fresh sinning. These stolid pleasure-

seekers were taking their outing staidly, with a proper respect for themselves, for the day, and for their Sunday clothes. Occasionally a band of roughs, of the gin-complexioned, divers-featured order, would troop along, noisily asserting by their loud cries and horse-play, their contemptuous indifference to public opinion. The bands from the piers made another noise. Nearer yet was the brassy blare of horns and the clarion tones of trumpets. Some military bands, heading their regiments, were drawing the crowds away from the beach. These scarlet-coated soldiers lit up the dull mass of the holiday-makers. A company of kilted Highlanders and a mustard-coloured troop of Sharpshooters were as good to look at as a ballet corps, and as enlivening. After their passing, there was no satisfying the eye with the dingily clad crowd.

We determined, therefore, to take a look at the town. Once away from the beach, and again we found that, practically, we had the city to ourselves. The streets had as little relation to those thickly peopled iron piers and blackened sands as many a man's public career bears to his private life.

Every city, like a house or a person or a cathedral, has an atmosphere peculiar to itself. The atmosphere of Yarmouth was that of an exhilarating freshness.

Never did sea breezes sweep into the remotest corners of a great city and cleanse the air of the last vestige of impurity as did the salty winds of Breydon Water and the North Sea sweep these streets of Yarmouth. Wherever one went, one was sure of the taste of salt air. The streets were still under their spell of the Sabbatical hush, intensified by desertion. The houses were neat and trim ; and many of them had a ship-shape, seamanlike air. There were rows upon rows of tiny houses with minute garden plots and little boxes full of growing plants and flowers to tell one how comfortably impecunious Yarmouth lived.

There were also other grander dwellings to proclaim the wealth that had rolled in to their owners across those shining seas. The houses that were best worth looking at were some which stood along the South Quay, honest dwellings of honest merchants, being counting-house and living house in one. But the neglect and decay that was overtaking most of these proved how the disease of the century—the love of foolish pomp—had overtaken these millionaires of the fisheries.

There was something else abroad upon the air better even than sea breezes. A chime of bells was making the kind of street-music that I like best. We knew there was a famous church in the town,

and we were bending our steps towards it. This melodious clanging—this playing by a choir that fills the city's streets with the mighty vibrations of a clear-tongued music, is a surer summons than either a languid conscience or the itching of an architectural curiosity.

St. Nicholas was set, as a parish church should be, in the very midst of the dead and the living. Close by the famous Yarmouth market and in among the tombs and grasses of an old churchyard rose the turret and spire of the largest of all the parish churches in England. As St. Nicholas had a fine old age as well as its size to recommend it, we had every reason to expect it would give us a solemnising moment. But once beneath its great barrel-roof, and the glamour of expectation gave way to limp disappointment. There is a genuine, childlike longing in every lover of great churches and cathedrals to be, at least, impressed. When to the advantages of a fine site they add the telling eloquence of a great age, one has a right to count on the glow and exaltation of an uplifting sensation. St. Nicholas should have spoken, through its age and early English beauty, in tongues of fire; yet it stirred us no more than if it had been a town-hall. All was brightness and light, but the light that came through its thin stained-glass was a secular light

and the brightness was due to a glossy aggressive newness. All the old galleries and high-curtained pews had been done away with. New brasses, new pulpits, and freshly decorated walls replaced what the Puritans had ravaged and the sixteenth-century parsimony had sold away. It was a relief to light upon some old Bibles in their glass cases, preserved, by the rarity of their editions, from the destroying broom of modern restoration. There was a good example of a Vinegar Bible and a very imperfect and damaged copy of the Black Letter Bible, for which Cranmer wrote a preface, and which, because of his preface, is sometimes called after him. These two relics were the most venerable objects St. Nicholas had to offer. On the whole we preferred the old graveyard to the modernised church. We could hear the great organ's stirring thunder and feel its penetrating sweetness under aisles that brought no disenchantment to the eyes. Beneath the trees there was a tender dimness and softened glow to match the soul-satisfying music.

As we were turning our backs on the old tombs an epitaph caught my eye. It was such an epitaph as aroused a grave doubt :

“Sacred to the memory of Joseph Pigg, the affectionate husband of Elizabeth Pigg.

Verses on a tomb are praises idly spent,
A man's good name is his best monument."

Which of these Piggs was the humourist? Or were they both the victims of a Yarmouth wag?

On our way homeward we fell a-wondering if any man or woman, could they rise from their stone prisons, would find their epitaphs to their liking. Why should we expect our nearest of kin to be gifted, suddenly, at our demise with a discernment they failed to evince during our lifetime? To live at all seems but to invite a mutual misconception. Who is fully understood, or, if truly read, willingly agrees with the popular verdict? Is it we ourselves who walk the airy chambers of life with befogged, bedimmed vision, seeing in the great mirrors of the world the false reflection of that self we never rightly know, and is it only our fellows who see plainly? For my own part I have always longed for a plan of life based on the principle on which books are made, with the opportunity a preface affords of explaining one's intention and desire; and, if age brings us to a second edition, there is your chance for a wholesale rectifying of all mistakes, with the door open for a bout with one's critics into the bargain.

Perhaps, had we stopped for the sermon at St. Nicholas, we should not have had time for philoso-

phising. As it was we were late. We were met at the door of the hotel by a porter, with the news that our friends were awaiting us. Awaiting us, or any other fate or fact, correctly speaking, they were not. They had taken full and complete possession of our apartments ; furthermore they confronted us with an unblushing pride in their comfort. Violet we found at the low tea-table, pouring out tea ; Lady Marten was sunk into the depths of the deepest-seated chair, and Renard was standing before the open fire, which had been lighted and was sending up a cosy warmth ; he had his hands behind him, and a cup of tea was near him on a diminutive table.

“By Jove! but you’ve made yourselves comfortable,” was his greeting, as we entered panting. But he never moved.

“My dear, how nice of you to take such cosy quarters. We were so famished!” cried Violet, as she proffered an airy kiss.

“And so cold,” added Lady Marten, also without moving.

“Fancy, we quanted nearly the whole way down!”

“Yes, we said you would. We sailed down. But then we earned it, you see, getting up at six.”

"Did you really? How enterprising of you! Will you have a cup of tea?"

"You can't have the fire. I'm chilled to the marrow."

"Nor this chair. I never was so done in my life," cooed Lady Marten.

And that was the beginning of a long evening of talk and chaff.

There was no hint of being off on the morrow. Renard discovered the herring quays early the next morning. He came back to us at breakfast with the fire in his eye he usually reserved for a canvas. In point of fact, he had returned for the tools of his trade, he said; he could hardly wait to be away and at work.

"Don't count on me for anything to-day, please. I shall be out there with those glorious fellows all day. Such grand old giants as they are! Wait till you see them, and the colour of the fish, with the salt, like crusted silver, frosting the great catches. It's the best thing yet." All this he had cried between his attacks on the eggs, the marmalade, and the coffee before him.

"Are we to remain here, twiddling our thumbs, till you finish half a dozen pictures?" he was asked.

"Oh, you mustn't mind me. Count me out. I never know what I can do when the working fit is on."

"To-day I grant you the freedom of the city ; but to-morrow morning we start for Cantley. There is to be a regatta," said Violet, with a pretty sternness.

"And then that will be the best thing yet," sarcastically remarked the man who loved him.

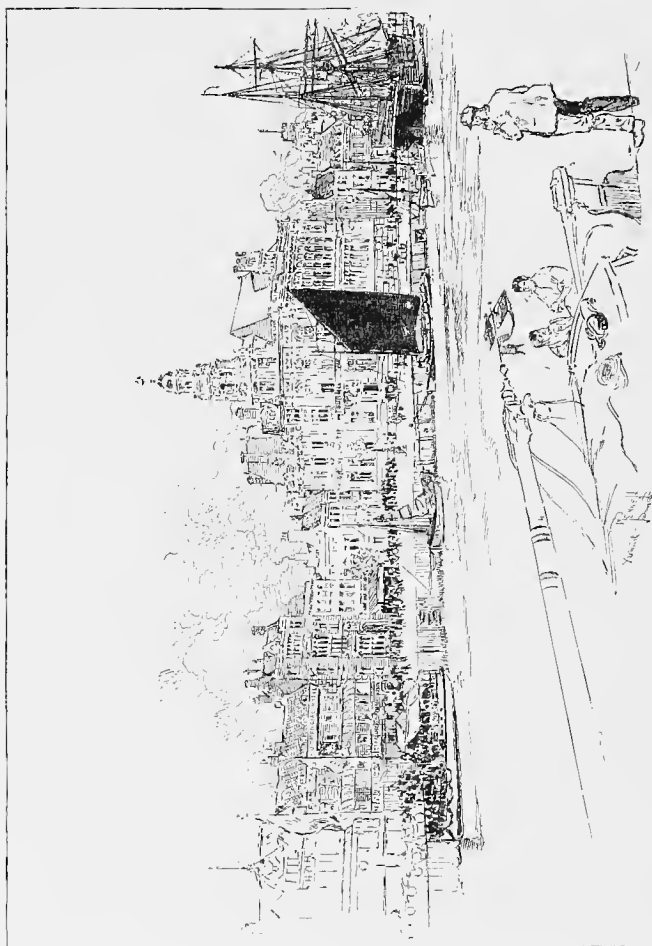
"All right," said Renard. He had been thinking over Miss Violet's softly spoken command. As he shouldered his traps, a little later, he remarked, casually, that we had better come down and see the show. It was worth looking at.

The herring show was indeed worth seeing. It was all the better from the fact of having our own artist on the spot. His easel and his open umbrella gave us a feeling of part ownership in the scene.

Crowded with men and fish as the quays were, Renard had found no difficulty in the setting up of his easel and umbrella. He had induced a sturdy young mariner to stand for him ; the young fisherman was superb of limb, rich in flesh tones, and he was booted and clad in glossy, well-soaked oils and leathers. That the quay felt a family pride in the

success of Renard's venture was soon obvious. "E'es got 'im in foine!" "We har tew hev one such dingling about ter do us all!" were some of the comments our artist heard whistling about his ears, and which he minded as little as if they had been the buzzing of flies. In time, the circle about him diminished to a paltry collection of children and loafers. Earnest workers soon recognise serious workmanship. Before Renard had been painting a half-hour, these gallant mariners saw the manner of man that was in their midst. His gift of concentration awed them. Before long Renard had pressed half the quay into his service. Every man who passed him gave a kick to a loafer, or swept the fringe of children away. When we finally left him, he was as free from disturbance or intruders as if he had been in his studio.

All this while we had been looking at the herring show. In from the Yarmouth-roads came the deep boats, their sails half furled, and their cargoes of fish spilling over the gunwales. These new-comers found the quays crowded with boats lying as close as they could be wedged. The dyed and tanned sails and the gaily painted hulls make these Yarmouth quays as brilliant a mass of colour as those fronting Eastern waters. The salted fish glittered like



THE QUAYS AT YARMOUTH

mounds of crystal ; the great nets were emptied of millions and millions of the shining creatures by fishermen who tossed them into baskets or dumped them into barrels. The men's faces, looking out from beneath their sou'westers, had the strength and firmness of outline peculiar to those who daily face danger, and face it on the high seas. Their bodies matched their expressions ; muscles rippled over arms and legs like an athlete's, and their skin was as dried and hardened as tanned leather.

That part of the town about the Herring Quay is the fisherman's Yarmouth. Here the rows of houses lie as close almost as their vessels crowding the wharves. Tall as were the dwellings fronting on the narrow alleys, their uppermost windows were thronged ; there was an overhanging assortment of bird-cages, of tin cans turned into flower-pots, of women's frowzy heads and children's curly locks. The alleys were as redolent of the odour of smoked herring as they were alive with sound. The songs of tropical birds, the squeal of a parrot, the chattering of monkeys, and the twanging of a guitar or a mandolin, floated out through many a yard to proclaim the voyages made by fathers and sons whose homes lay in these narrow streets.

Our own appearance in this part was the signal for a shower of parrot's curses to descend upon us, whereat the small boys laughed mightily.

In the heart of this city of alleys was a building that, had it not had so dismal a history, would have seemed a little palace, with a festive past. Although a thirteenth-century building, the Toll House had a gala air suggestive of a Shakespearian setting. The fine outside staircase, leading to an open balcony, lead one to expect an Elizabethan historical background. The cells, once horrible holes, for the place was a notorious prison, were now as clean as whitewash could wipe them. Close by was the oldest thing in Yarmouth, Grey Friars, said to be a Saxon church. It lost nothing, as a fitting adjunct to its antiquity, by being shown by two old ladies, seemingly as ancient as the ruin itself.

After a long day of feasting on sights, we quickened amazingly at the thought of having done with them. The best of the day was still to come. When we returned to our inn there was enough chill in the air to make the blaze of the fire a warrantable indulgence. We sat about in a close circle, toasting our feet. Incidentally we were waiting for Renard. A voice at the door and a question of familiar phrasing soon announced his advent.

"Is this a civilised place? Can you get me a cocktail?" we heard him ask in the hall.

"I never knew men who cared such a lot about eating and drinking as artists," was Violet's greeting, as she smiled up a smile of luxurious languor into Renard's tired face.

He took her hand, quite openly, clasping it slightly, as he bent down to sit beside her. "How has your day gone?" was his only rejoinder. Then, later, he told us what a great day his had been; how friendly he and the fishermen had grown; how they had taken him off, for beer, to one of their own taverns; how clean was the latter, and how pretty the barmaid; what stunning bits of colour and what noble groups the great fellows made, standing about under the room's low ceiling, and how mightily they swore, and how like old Vikings they could drink.

"There's a lot of the old Dane and Norse in them all, still. They are as prime for a raid or a bit of privateering or piracy as they ever were. My eyes, but they can drink!"

"How did you ever get such a fine creature as your model to stand for you?" asked Lady Marten.

"I don't believe *he* drank," said Violet.

"Oh no, *he* was no toper, not *he*. Dear Lady

Marten, there wasn't any difficulty whatever in getting him to pose as long as he could stand. But you see, like all temperance men, by noon he was as drunk as a lord. I left him fast asleep under a table."

"Poor fellow!" sighed Violet.

"Lucky devil!" cried Renard. "He never earned so many drinks as easily in his life. By the way—where is that cocktail?" And for the first time Renard's tone had a querulous note in it.

"Are you so tired?" quickly asked Violet, rising to ring.

"Very," was Renard's now quiet answer. It was Violet herself who brought him the biscuit and his glass. Then she talked to him, and soothed him, as women will, when a strong man has a weary moment in which he plays and is the child.

We were the gainers that evening by the fact of Renard's fatigue. There was a quiet dinner in our rooms. After dinner there was a long evening of music. Lady Marten found the piano in the sitting-room not too hopelessly out of tune. And Violet's violin sang and trilled to us till the lights were out in all the windows along the quays save our own.

CHAPTER XVI

UP THE YARE

GETTING aboard our yacht the next morning was a distinctly commonplace performance. What is more prosaic than a drive across a busy city in a comfortable landau? Our yacht had had the good luck to meet with adventure. To reach the lumber-wharf across the river, where we joined her, she had run her nose into quite a number of nautical perils. To cross the water, there were bridges to be passed; for this feat, her mast had been lowered; but a barge had run into her as she was rounding the last arch of the bridge; and it had been Davy's skill in quanting that alone had prevented a disastrous collision. Next, a steamboat was down upon them, refusing to give right of way, "an' I thought she'd got away with my bowsprit, but we saved her by an inch, thank God!" and Davy, furthermore, gave us privately to understand



ON THE YARE

B. P. L.

that Yarmouth was as bad a place for a boat to "make" as "any man needs, to remind him of a hot place."

For a city rich in wickedness, and a boat miraculously saved from demolition, both Yarmouth and the *Vacuna* were good to look upon at ten that summer's morning. For London, the hour would have been the beginning of the day's work. But seaport towns have the look of having been up all night. Yarmouth was, in truth, far too engaged with her traffic at this, the hour of its flood-tide, to pay heed to such triflers as we. Even the lumber-wharf administered a number of hard blows to our egoism. She had the patronising air of a business man toward a loafer. The great ships moored alongside, the hard-worked longshoremen, the very cats and dogs, had but time for a side glance. An inadequate company of small boys were the sole lookers-on at our setting forth; and even this volunteer deputation from the Yarmouth leisure class saw us sailing away without so much as the quiver of an envious eyelid.

The company we had brought aboard made ample amends for this indifference of the world. Cross's wherry had been left behind at its moorings; our friends were to make this, their second trip to Norwich as our guests. The arrangement, from

its very inception, pleased every one. Violet and Renard, indeed, openly declared they had secretly wondered why so simple a solution of many difficulties had not occurred to some one before now. Lady Marten, true to her sisterhood—to that order of womankind who, at birth, take the vow never to have a mind of their own—was equally struck, after hearing Violet's opinion, with the felicity of the proposition. Even Cross forswore his silence, and thanked us, with an approach to effusion, for the boon he did not mention—viz. another week of happy tavern-life along the Yarmouth quays.

With the advent of our guests, both our boat and our crew had undergone a change for the better. Like all men of imagination, Davy worked best when under the stimulant of excitement. To have "Cross's party" joined to his own, and to have the sole responsibility of landing us safely at the Norwich quays, was an honour that had in it the ferment of intoxication. His pride in his boat, and also in himself, took a strictly practical turn. The *Vacuna's* deck and her brasses had been polished to a mirrory brightness; his own costume had been greatly smartened; and Grimes, obviously before our coming on board, had been ordered below to a fierce conflict with soap and towels, from which the

lad had emerged as shining as a red apple. Now, with his boat and crew as trig as any turn-out on the Broads, our skipper was facing his sails with the look of a proud man. He was not, however, entirely happy. Company lies heavy on the provincial mind. A guest is never an easy matter for the social digestion of the rustic, and, seaman though he was, Davy was still the child of suburban pavements. For all his professed ideals of a Broads' skipper's hospitality, like many another theorist, he broke down as a practical exponent of his beliefs. During the first hour of our sail, he was as enamoured of silence as a Trappist.

His taciturnity touched our pride. His conversational talent had indeed been promised as a part of the entertainment the *Vacuna* had to offer; and here, before us, was our vaunted talker as glum as an oyster. Once free of the innumerable boats capering about the outer Yarmouth wharves, and with a good wind in our sails, I essayed what many a woman has so often mistakenly attempted: I tried to make one wit show off before another.

"Davy, how did you leave your wife?"

"Quite well, ma'am, I thank you kindly."

"Was she glad — was Polly Ann glad to see you?"

"Margaret's always glad, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am."

Margaret! At the lifting of that screen of his marital dignity, I left Davy to his tiller.

"Pretty, is it not, to see a town fading, receding, like a city out of a dream?" Violet said abruptly, to cover the smile that had gone round.

We all looked at the town, and agreed unanimously that it was indeed like a city in a dream. A little while ago it had been too near, now it was a part of the diminishing perspective. A great windmill stood out in the clear foreground, towering majestically above the city's red roofs; beyond those wide arms, to the left, rose the turrets and the spire of St. Nicholas. The shores bristled with the fortifications of the shipping; and the large waters across which we and hundreds of sails were speeding, seemed a twin sea, made captive by the miles of sand on which a great city had arisen, to show its British teeth to the German Ocean.

As it was not a Broad, no one had trumpeted the fame of Breydon Water. Yet this great sheet of water, formed by the meeting of the mouths of two rivers, the Yare and the Waveney, gave us the best bit of sailing our cruise yielded. It is a muddy salt-water lake; but it is wide, and across

its flat shores and over the stretch of the liquid acreage the breeze had a chance to do a real bit of blowing. The wind was living up to its chances on this brilliant young morning. Not only we, but any number of boats were scudding along with full sails. For any one who cares at all about a boat, it is sheer happiness to see one's deck at an angle of forty-five degrees with the horizon. The *Vacuna*, for most of her course across the lake, lay heeled over; and what was highly conducive to the general elation was the steadiness of the breeze. For a good hour it carried us along with no hint of a lull in its persistent strength.

No one had praised Breydon Water; yet it gave us the most perfect of marine pictures. It was a miscellaneous fleet that was gathered together upon its waters. Lumbering schooners, with gunwales level with the wavelets; racers, with their white walls of canvas, yielding with regal dignity to the wind's pressure; wherries, some with sails richly tanned, others as black and as muddy as their skippers' faces; tiny sailing-boats, stanchly standing up before the stiff breeze; and yachts, whose canvas was spread, some wing and wing, with spinnakers flying, others under full sail—such was the motley fleet that fled, in full light of the morning



SAILING ACROSS FIELDS NEAR BREYDON WATER

sun, with swift pinions across this radiant-faced lake. In the misty distance, where the vanishing fog of the morning still veiled the shore, hulls and sails stood out like stately phantoms.

Half-way across the lake we had caught up with the fastest wherry on the Broads. She could do her twenty-seven miles in five hours, with a cargo. She was fittingly named the *Surprise*; her three hundred yards of canvas had been dyed with the rich browns of herring-oil; and aloft her "Welsh Lady" rode the masthead, as Davy volunteered to explain. As we tacked, the *Surprise* gave us a proof of her treatment of inferior sails: she took all our wind. Our own reefed sails were to blame, Davy muttered. "Don't carry canvas enough to catch any wind, crawling along like this!" was our skipper's angry outburst. We had, in truth, been flying along since the beginning of our start. But what seaman, when he is being outsailed, is ever entirely truthful? Now, these signs of a reviving interest in his trade pleased us mightily. Davy of Yarmouth was coming back to life.

"Shake her out! shake her out!" he cried all at once, in his natural voice. So greatly rejoiced were the men of our party to hear it once more, with its true skipper's note of authority, richly

frighted with muttered oaths, that both were at the sails in a moment, skilfully unreefing them. Once the sails were freed, away we flew.

"Ah, ha! Now she's talkin', she is," cried Davy, almost beside himself with joy.

The *Surprise* was close upon us; she had her reputation to sustain, and she proposed, with that fact in mind, to run a bit of a risk. She tacked so close to our own course that twice our pole grazed her cargo; and every tack we made brought us under her stern. Finally a spurt of wind favoured us, and again we were flying beyond her. We passed her on the starboard tack.

"We'll do it this time!" cried Davy, his face aglow. And we did. We were soon showing the *Surprise* the exceeding whiteness of our heels.

"Country folks haven't any manners. We wouldn't have raced her if she hadn't stood in our way. Give me townies! Grimes, my lad, a glass of beer!" With the tipping of his glass, Davy's true reign as skipper had begun.

"Now we must make him talk," murmured Renard.

"Do!" returned Violet, beneath her breath, as her soft eyes rested on the painter. By the manner of her straightening her lids, she told us what season-

ing she meant to give to the softness. "Do! We shall watch your method. We shall see how it compares with our own, when we are winding you up, Prince of Monologists!"

"Do I talk so very much?" asked Renard. He was lying flat on his back, with his head in the hollow of his clasped hands.

The chorus of laughter which greeted his question brought him to a quick upright.

"Then," he cried out, with an amused smile, and yet a certain heat in his voice, "then, if I do, you shouldn't encourage me. It's wicked to aid in developing disease."

"Oh-h, we like it," I said.

"Particularly when you talk till dawn," added Violet thoughtlessly.

"When did Mr. Renard talk till dawn?" asked Lady Marten. She was as serious as if asking for a historical fact.

"Whenever he can hire listeners, dear Lady Marten," said the other man on board.

"But I don't see why he need hire them. He really talks very well," said her ladyship, with sincere literalness. And then she added, "Indeed, Mr. Renard, you are very clever, I am sure. I have often wondered why they don't make you

president, over there"; and she waved her hand vaguely towards the sea, as if America were certain to be lying somewhere about, wherever there was a great deal of water.

"O Aunt Harriet!" Violet gasped, after swallowing her laughter. "I am afraid Aunt Harriet is dreadfully ignorant about things—over there"; and she waved her hand prettily, in imitation of the elder lady's gesture. "But then we all are. Do you want to be president, Mr. Renard?" She laughed, a gurgling, melodious laugh, into the eyes of the painter, as he lay again, with upraised face, looking into the blue of two heavens.

"Oh yes; I intend to be president of some academy or other. My true ambition is to be king, though."

"Where—king?"

"In one woman's heart." And he opened his eyes full on the bending blue of the nearer heaven.

Now, it is certain that love-making on a small yacht has its disadvantages. There are no safe corners of retreat for the more thrilling asides. It had been my fortune to overhear, not only the above somewhat betraying bit of dialogue, but many others, in which the byplay of telling glances and the eloquence of rapt pauses had been acted with

full dramatic effect by two experts. It was impossible not to do a certain amount of speculation on one's own account. Would the long glances, the thrill in the voice, the visible fluttering of the soul's pulse, all come to naught? Who could tell? Summer is so fertile in resource, with its open-air opportunities for furthering engagements. What with the pitfalls besetting a man in country houses, in moonlit lanes, and on yachting trips, a bachelor, who remains such, should be looked upon as something abnormal. Renard, at least, was vulnerably mortal. He might, in a way, have been called an ideal lover of women, since he could, on the slightest possible notice, love all women, provided they showed no age, whatever the age might be, and were beautiful, from a man's or an artist's standpoint. Into how many women's eyes had he not looked, and left imprinted thereon the image of his graceful faithlessness? Some of these ladies, so far from dying of the malady of desertion, had lived to practise the shabby trick on others. There was Charm, who, through a long Normandy summer, had been subjected to the ingenious coqueties of one of Renard's most finished flirtations. Every one prophesied she would either marry him or die of disappointment. These gossips

were alarmists. Charm had survived Renard's period of cooling to make a number of other men wretched, according to the susceptibility of their natures, or to the activity of their designs on her fortune. Her own career as a persecutor came to an end with her marriage to a charming American.

And now it was Violet Belmore with whom Renard was in love. Was it really Violet herself? Or was it woman, beauty, grace, charm of nature, charm of mind, to which his genius had surrendered itself? And if it were but an ephemeral attraction, how would Violet take it? Few women accept philosophically, as did Charm, the fact of having been a passing slide in the emotional magic-lantern of a genius. Violet Belmore, I was certain, might be trusted to direct her fate, rather than be forced to submit to the dictates of the Parcae. Meanwhile, as a mere spectator, the comedy playing itself out before me was amusing. I made a match on the spot. I married Violet's exquisite delicacy and her sensuous grace to Renard's gleaming countenance, with the unmistakable vital spark of a great talent in his dark eye. I wedded them symbolically, as it were, as the Venetians married the Adriatic to the sea. It was beauty's surrender to genius. That, in truth, is the only way one ought to deal

with other people's love affairs ; such relations should have the mystery and the intangibility of mythology.

Meanwhile every one on board suddenly appeared to be talking at once. Violet was declaring that, as she did not care in the least for ruins, she should not go up to the Castle. No one seemed surprised at Renard immediately conceiving a dislike for Burgh Castle. Lady Marten remained equally firm in her determination to look upon the great Roman fortress. "I must say, I dote on ruins." So innocent a taste, with a ruin quite handy, as it were, with which to gratify the liking, made an appeal of the right order to at least two of the party.

Davy had his word to say. "There's only a bit of an old wall or two—like Venice. But no hartch. Only bits of walls, my lady." But my lady stood firm. If ever a woman knows her own mind, it is she who may be said to have none.

. Our jolly-boat was soon landing us at Burgh flats. After the rowing, there was quite a bit of walking to be done. The Castle, or what still remained of it, crowned the hill. Our boat had left us on the marshes, some distance below the elevation. The grasses, the shallows running up into the flat fen-lands, and the clustering shrubs, made a super-

fine mixture of salt and sweet perfumes. Across some fields two valiant young heifers came up to have a look at us. But Lady Marten had a long-standing grudge against heifers, it appeared; and she explained this to us in a somewhat high C as the four-footed youngsters drew nearer. Her soft voice became shrill as she hastily reminded us she was wearing her golf-skirt of striped reds. Grimes was promptly ordered to divert the attention of the heifers to less inflammable objects than golf-skirts. And thus closed the sole incident of our exploring of an old Roman ruin.

Burgh Castle, on its hill, has only its great stretching walls, some fine bastions, and some crumbling turrets to offer to the eager eye of the realist. But even a realist might find in walls fourteen feet high and nine feet thick, enclosing five acres of ground, a site and foundations on which imagination might be permitted to reconstruct the magnificent edifice that has vanished. The ivy-grown walls abutted on ripening wheat-fields; and there was an unconquerable look of a mighty strength, powerless now to hold or to vanquish, in the old bricks and the still granite-like Roman cement. They had played their part; they had held the country against the barbarian. This Burgh Castle and yonder

Caister, by Yarmouth, between them, for how many a century had they commanded the country for miles about, guarding this mouth of Breydon, holding, as it were, in their teeth the keys to the riparian fields beyond. These two military stations, garrisoned by the Roman Stablesian Horse, saw the waves of the sea recede, the Romans give way before the Danes, and the Danes in turn yield to the Normans. The great prospect, alone, is nearly the same. There is more land than the Romans looked out upon. Yarmouth was but a sandy beach then, where the fishermen dried their nets. But the Yare carries the eye still up, along the meadows, towards Norwich. To the south the Waveney flows gallantly to the sea, past ripening fields and through liquid Broad.

"It's really very pretty, is it not? A ruin is always pleasing." Lady Marten had levelled her lorgnette at the ivies and the great walls with the same languid grace with which she inspected a new bonnet or a fresh face. Banal as was her verdict, what description of a ruin is better? There is a charm in decay, and a power of pleasing in fallen stones and toppling bricks; but the poets and romance-writers have overworked the charm. One looks at ruins nowadays; one photographs them; but there are few writers left who have the courage

to enlarge upon their beauties. Lady Marten and her lorgnette typify the modern attitude towards ruined masses with a history.

At the base of the hill was a hedged enclosure. A slab which, at first, we took to be a tombstone turned out to be the epitaph of a cool spring : "The Lord is my Shepherd. He leadeth me beside the still waters, He restoreth my soul." It was all as true as if it had been written for that spring. When we drank of its waters, we were indeed restored ; we rose up as those who were regenerate. We were also sitting on texts, as we presently discovered. The hospitable benches were covered with Biblical quotations. Although this practical resting upon the sacred words had an element of inappropriateness, the nicety of our taste did not hasten our departure.

On our return to the yacht, we found Davy was in full swing of speech. He left off to help us aboard, and was for dropping his narrative and resuming his hold on the tiller.

"No, wait till you've told us the end. Better still, begin again," cried Renard. And Davy began his tale.

"A fisherman o' Yarmouth, havin' taken so many herrin's that he could neither sell them nor eat them all, hung some up in his wherry cabin, an'

was astonished, some days afterwards, to find that they had changed their colour from white to the 'Deaurite ruddie' of barn-dried bloaters. The sight so astonished both the fisherman an' his wife that they fell down on their knees an' blessed themselves an' cried, 'A miracle! a miracle!' The fisherman went up to the king's court, then at Burgh Castle, to show 'em, an' his Majesty, partakin' of the fellow's astonishment, licensed him to carry them up and down the realm as strange monsters. That's from out a book my daughter read me, an' it's all true, as I'm tellin' it." Then Davy sprang to his mast, to shove the boom round with his foot, the quicker to fill his sail.

We were soon at our ease once more in our accustomed seats. Renard was civil enough to ask us news of the Castle; but to him Roman ruins were an old story. It was Davy's tale that held his interest, and which shortly inspired him to burst forth—

"What a restoration for an old ruin is that story of Beau Nash's that your extraordinary skipper got hold of. There's the whole picture of the life of the ancients—their credulity, their superstition, their glorious belief in things, in God and in their king! 'He went up to the king's court.' What a text for

* * *

a sermon on the simplicity of those days! What monarch of to-day would receive a poor fisherman, would 'partake of his astonishment'? Or more difficult still to conceive that a monarch should so interest himself in the fortunes of a subject as to despatch him with a show in his pocket, and his king's blessing for a capital. Ah, me! what good old times the times that were not must have been! For, of course, there has never been any great difference, any such marked change as the historian and the sociologist would have us believe. Men have always been cruel, base, revengeful, treacherous, just as they have been glad and sorry, have wept and laughed. A savage and a civilised man understand each other, don't they? Had there been so radical a change as we flatter ourselves civilisation has wrought, what should we have in common with an Ashantee? By the way, has it occurred to any of you that, while the savage commonly dies when we attempt to elevate him, reform him, christianise him, call the process what you will, he and his state of wildness remain as an ideal of life to us? To go about without clothes, what a relief from Bond Street tailors! To wear a garland, as do the Samoans, what elegance and simplicity! How pure in mind are Stevenson's islanders! If you want coarseness, impurity, vicious-

ness, walk into any club in London, in Paris, or in New York. The talk there is civilised talk, and the men are the finest product nature, after her throes of labour, has been able to evolve; but for purity—for sweetness and light—give me a Samoan with his garland.”

Renard’s arguments were so absurdly fallacious, we were content to answer them with a smile. We had, however, forgotten there were two Richmonds in the field. Davy saw a chance, doubtless, to recapture his lost audience. At this first pause in the painter’s monologue, he hastened to free his hand, that he might have it ready for illustrative gesture, and, leaning his back against his tiller, began without further delay.

“Yes, sir, beggin’ your pardon, I’ve seen ’em, those islanders, an’ gentle an’ pretty as any I ever did see, are the girls an’ the women. The men are sly an’ cunnin’. You must look sharp, or you’ll find a knife or somethin’ gone. But petty thievin’, that ain’t nothin’ in a savage. It’s cruelty I can’t like, an’ never could. I was on the Flemish canals—curious people those Flemish. Well, they’re mostly poor, like myself; but they take advantage of their infirmities. They make the dogs work. When they get one eighteen inches long, they put him to a

cart, as if he was a grown horse or a woman. I argued with 'em. 'They've as good a right to work as us,' they said. 'Not so,' says I. 'Every man accordin' to his natur',' says I. 'Manual labour ain't accordin' to a dog's natur'.' Frenchy, over the water, he'd never work a dog. They prize a dog equal to a woman. Lord! sir, did you see that?"

At Davy's sudden break in his talk, the three men's heads were lifted skyward. We women saw a few birds flying in a bunch across the blue zenith.

"Gad! what a shot!" cried Renard. He had jumped to his feet at a single bound.

"They looked like young ones," said the sportsman of the party, as he eyed the wild duck till they were a mere speck in the distance.

"That's what they are, sir," affirmed our skipper, with an experienced eye cocked at the birds. "There's prime shootin' on these flats all through the autumn; an' in the winter, if you're not afraid of the cold, there's a lot of birds this way."

"Let's come here in the autumn," said Renard, as he reseated himself, crossing his long legs; and he nodded to his friend solemnly, as sportsmen do, when they are sealing a vow to kill that which flies and is wild.

"We will," was as solemnly promised by the man

opposite him, who also seriously crossed his legs, and, a little later, his arms; and then he and Renard were very still and quiet as they sat and made more vows neither of them could possibly keep.

Davy continued to hold the floor for a good fifteen minutes or more, with his tales of the shooting to be had on these Breydon and Burgh flats and meadows. From time immemorial, it appeared, this region had been a huntsman's paradise. It was the best non-preserved place for fowl in the whole kingdom, these mud-banks yielding excellent feeding-ground. Hearing so much of birds made us eager to see a few nearer than those that had passed us on their sky-journey. Some black objects feeding on a distant bank, being large and of imposing plumage, Violet declared were ducks. They were soon correctly classified as crows, Kentish crows, Davy emphasised, with much impressiveness. Then he went on to explain wherein a Kentish crow was a bird to be mentioned with respect. Many were the snails and mussels embedded in the mud flats of Breydon Water. Now, the crows are great gourmands as well as scavengers. They would come any distance to procure the delicacies to be found at Breydon. But the mussel has a shell harder than an oyster's; and, after all, a beak, even a crow's beak, is only a

beak. But if a bird is a glutton, it behoves him also to be inventive. "Well, sir, what do you think? The crows takes the shell up by its beard, flies up in the air with it, sights an object, a stone usually, drops it like a shot, an', sir, his shell flies into a thousand pieces. Then Mr. Crow flies down an' enjoys himself. On a wherry, many's the time I've wished I was a crow. Grimes, my lad, you may bring me a glass." With the glass came a fresh outbreak, chiefly dealing with recapitulations of his own misfortunes as a wherryman. The sketch of his miseries was a vivid one. But our interest had wandered to something more vital. Four hours in the open air have a greater effect on the digestion than the greatest of story-tellers can hope to have on the imagination. We had come to the spot where luncheon had been promised us. Davy was cut short in his tale, and peremptorily told to lay-to. This being an order that spoke directly to Grimes' most vital organ, the anchor was ready, and the ropes were handled with a skill that won even a grunt of approval from the skipper.

"C'est bon, hein?" said Renard, not once, but half a dozen times during the meal. He always spoke what he called the "language of the palate" when praising a dish. "You certainly do know

how to provision a yacht. Never tasted such glorified sandwiches, never! Give me another half-dozen, please."

The "glorified sandwiches" were simple enough, we told him.

"But of a simplicity all their own, dear lady. There is the delicate reserve of the olive in that dressing. The onion is there, robbed of its vulgarity; its essence alone is retained; and the way in which the oil is married to the egg—it is of a surprising perfection. Violet, try another."

Such praises made the meal a gay one. The breeze had most amiably entered into competition with our merriment; it had told the sun it intended to keep us thoroughly well fanned during this luncheon-hour, as otherwise, with five people in a small cabin, we should find the noon heat a great extinguisher of fun. On deck, a little later, the same kindly breeze was there to aid us in the task of digestion. Engaging as were its pleasant blowing ways, we needed no Davy to tell us "it was blowin' light."

Once on our way between the mud-banks and the marshes, our pace seemed a slow one, after the speed we had made across Breydon Water. The remainder of the afternoon was mostly spent in wondering

whether the fate of quanting was before us. This interest in the vicissitudes of navigation was not equally shared by all on board. Lady Marten had gone below ; next to her admiration for ruins came a "doting on a bit of a nap after luncheon." Renard had taken Violet out upon the forward deck, where he might do his talking free from the disenchantment of interruption ; and we two were left to look abroad upon the new country into which we were drifting.

The Yare was taking us back to inland Norfolk. Slowly the power of the sea was yielding before the might of earth. Slowly, step by step, we watched the land, and its ways of reconquering its lost territories. To the coarse grasses succeeded the blowing daisies ; to the mud of the flats there came the breath of new-mown fields. The air took up the softer perfumes ; there was the scent of growing trees, the glad rejoicing of timid flowers, blooming gaily in protected corners. Once more there came upon the ear the homely bleating of the sheep and the sound of a cooing dove. These signs of conquest were not always continuous. The sea played a losing game of hide-and-seek. For a mile or more the fields were plainly boasting of their strength. Then came a pulk, a dyke, or a series of shallows—minute arms of the sea that pushed themselves out, as if attempting

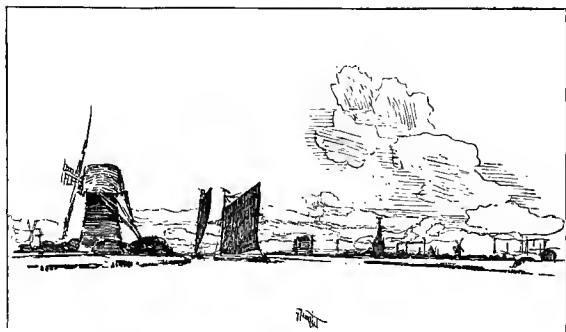
to re-establish their sway. There were other signs about, and in plenty, to prove how futile were such efforts. Man had come ; he had put his trust in the land, and had set upon her the seal of that trust. Farmhouses, windmills, carefully groomed orchards, gardens, lawns, and in the distance a church, with its tower rising above the level of the banks to show its belief in the stability of earth's promises. It was, however, many a mile before a genuine, fully grown, agricultural country was reached. Man has marked the stages of his progress in names set forth in maps ; and the sailor in his turn has cut up the earth's distances into terms to suit his vernacular. On comparing the two, I liked the sailor's the better. Between Breydon and Reedham there are ten such nautical names for the reaches,—“raches,” as the skippers term them. “Borrow” stands for Burgh Flats. Next comes Barney Arms ; near to that we had taken our luncheon. Then came Fi' Mile House ; and from the latter to Reedham town, the various windings of the river became Tilekil' Rache, or Six Mil' Rond, or Six Mil' or Seven Mil' House, or Bowlin' Alley, or Eyht Mil' House, according to the distinguishing landmarks.

What cared we ? Will the celestial regions themselves be more perfect in beauty because of the names

by which they are known? We were drifting onward in a happy stupor of content ; the country was gaining in richness at every turning of the gentle river. The sounds that fell upon the ear were restful ; even the children's quarrelling at play was an agreeable irritant. Our friends the cows had the same affable look as those we had left on the banks of the Bure ; and after clay banks, what is more satisfying to the eye than a green lawn ?

“Is this Reedham, already? ”

It was the cry of a lover, to whom time and seasons are not, and to whom places are a great weariness. We were not in love with Violet Belmore. We had not been sitting out, alone with her, on a yacht's forward deck. Notwithstanding these disqualifying facts, we also openly resented the fact of coming to anchor below the Ship Inn at Reedham.



CHAPTER XVII

CANTLEY REGATTA—UP TO NORWICH

AN undefinable sentiment of regret, that seemed in some remote way to be allied to the light mist that enveloped the river, spread its saddening hues over our last evening on the Broads. The fact of its being the last night had aroused a vague expectation, impalpable, yet persistent. Just what Reedham was expected to yield in the way of an appropriate farewell manifestation, I could not have told ; yet, as we settled down on deck, before a vast sky, of a pale, tender yellow, that stretched its luminous tones into far-reaching infinity, the feeling that something would happen grew into a conviction. But nothing happened. The sole event of the evening brought only a very sensible disappointment. With the serving of coffee, Renard remarked casually that Violet had consented to take a run on her "bike" with him up into the village. He had a telegram to send.

We smiled the smile of affable hypocrisy ; we played the amiable farce of pretending to believe in the ruse of excuse which lovers, since Adam, have gone on cheerfully manufacturing, called an impediment in veracity. We still smiled as we saw them start off, up a somewhat steep grade, whose steepness pleased us, somehow. We were not vindictive by nature ; but it is also quite true that, as we saw them labouring at their pedals, we smiled with open content. Once over the brow of the low hill, and their flying figures were lost in the blur of the dusk. They were safe.

As eye and thought followed those vanishing shapes speeding along the green lane, with the love in their hearts that is only for two, why did there seem to be a symbolic meaning in the picture? Was the world, to which we were to return on the morrow, sending forth its prophetic warnings of the fleeting evanescence of all pleasure, and of the inherent, organic selfishness that is at the core of all human action?

Lady Marten, meanwhile, had not been wasting time in sentiment. No sooner had she been assured of a quiet evening than she had begun to make it a somewhat active one for those about her. "Really, you know, with the damp on the river, it's quite cosy in the cabin, is it not? Grimes, my lad, just find

my knitting, will you? in the third pocket of the second division of my small Gladstone. And Davy, my good man, there's a book I saw, with a lot about Reedham, in the fifth locker of the cabin. I've had a feeling, ever since we came to anchor, don't you know, that there must be a ruin or so in town. Here's the page. Thank you!"

What man, were he skipper, mate, or merely another woman's husband, who is not pressed into doing the bidding of the Lady Martens of this world, and with every appearance of its being a willing service. The woman, I have noticed, who usually manages to secure the most untiring and useful attention from the other sex is commonly she whose sole claim is that of her talent for command.

Up through the open hatchway came a voice, reading aloud. Lady Marten was seated very upright, with the cabin light full upon her white hair, that lay like a soft crown beneath the bit of lace that deceived no one into a belief of its being a cap. I could hear the click of her needles, as their ceaseless play went on, in and out of the pink wool. The river was as quiet as the shore. A single wherry lay moored beside us, and from the banks the flickering lights from the taproom of the little inn were the

sole visible signs of human stir. The voice out of this stillness was saying :

Lodbrog or Lothbrog, the Dane, it is said, as he was looking for birds near the Islands of Denmark, by a sudden tempest was driven across the sea, and, entering the Yare, landed at Reedham, where the court of Edmund, King of East Angles, was then kept. Lodbrog being received with court favour, frequently associated with Bern, the King's huntsman, whom he soon excelled. This creating envy in Bern, he murdered Lodbrog in the woods, but was detected by the affection of Lodbrog's dog, and, being convicted, was committed to the mercy of the winds and the waves, which carried him to Denmark. Being examined on the rack concerning Lodbrog's death, he concealed his own guilt, and attributed the crime solely to King Edmund, in consequence of which the Danish chieftains Hinguar and Hubba, to avenge the death of their countryman, immediately raised an army of twenty thousand men, and, taking Bern for their guide, suddenly ravished all East Anglia, overcame Edmund, took him prisoner, and soon after beheaded him, and by this means put an end to the Saxon dynasty in East Anglia, about the year 870.

Then I heard the book closed with a bang. I felt equally certain of the next action, that of a man's figure pushing its way, with a polite haste, through the cabin doors. Lady Marten's monotonous voice, however, with its flavourless accent, was calling out :

"Did they really, now? How very enterprising of them! And so long ago, too. Ah! here are

our wanderers. Well, my dear, what have you to tell us of Reedham?"

"Of Reedham, Aunt Harriet?"

Violet had bounded on deck, after the vault from her saddle, and stood fanning her flushed face, as her startled eyes sought Renard's.

"I thought you said you were going to Reedham?" cried her aunt's voice from within, above the click of her needles. "Did you see any ruins?"

"Mr. Renard, did we see any ruins?" whispered Violet, in an agitated voice.

"No, dear, no ruins, but a thatched church and a pretty town, full of little gardens and houses," I answered for him, in her ear.

"How did you know?" she whispered back. But aloud she repeated, between little gasps of laughter, "No, dear aunt, no ruins; but a church, thatched, and such a pretty town——"

And thus it came about that our evening, after all, was a merry one.

The next morning was a pearl of a day. But when one is scanning the sky for the sign of a wind, pearl tones are not the right ones. With a regatta to be seen at Cantley, no time was to be lost. A regatta, to be sure, had no better chances than we for seeing a race, with a fog on the river, and the land

swathed in mist. There was, however, the comforting promise held out "that the breeze was sure to spring up. Queen's weather—that's what we're used to at Cantley. An' it's what we'll have to-day, please God!" Such was the prophecy of our optimistic skipper.

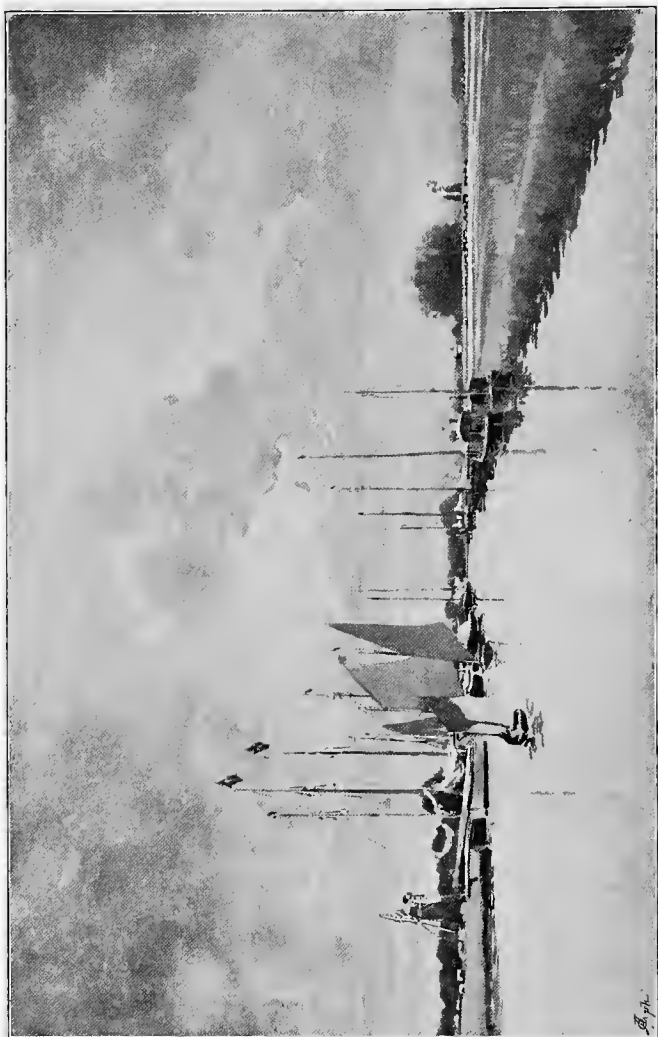
It was as lifeless a morning as ever an optimist was called upon to believe in. As we drew out of Reedham, it was to drift into a land of mist. Our sails flopped disconsolately; even the tide, that, luckily, was running up river, had a languid pulse. It was as still as night. The only sounds were the heavy labouring tread of our skipper and his mate; for at last we were quanting in dead earnest. At first we took uncommonly to the ease of the gentler motion. From the point of view of speed, however, quanting cannot be recommended as a way of getting along in the world. The houses seemed to be duplicated, as we crawled past them; and before we had left a tree, we knew its anatomy by heart.

Suddenly the river quivered; the grasses began to flicker; a yawl sprang away from a near bank, and presently there was the old song of the wind upon the reeds along the shore. Davy and Grimes brought their quants to an abrupt stop, and the latter was

given the familiar order to bring the cheering glass. "Quantin' do heat a man fast," panted our skipper, as he mopped his brow.

Out of the mist rose the familiar river features. The trembling grasses on a thatched roof-ridge nodded gaily to the innumerable sails that sprang, a fairy fleet, from the womb of the fog. Most of these boats were going our way. A single wherryman, speeding along towards Yarmouth, was plied with questions, as he ran past the sails on their way to Cantley. "Any breeze up Cantley way?" asked a cutter of the wherry. "It's a blow, no breeze, an' that's what it is," was the wherry's answer. "Had they started yet?" cried a boy's voice, petulantly, from a rowing-boat with a patched sail. "They were hoisting sail" was the exciting news from the racing centre, on hearing which a dog of true sportsman-like instincts and of enthusiastic nature barked joyously, as he ran along the bank, wagging his tail.

"We'll be makin' Devil's House Reach in no time now," was Davy's cheering announcement. "That's where the course lies—from Cantley to the Reach. We'll lay-to close by the inn, if there's a foot o' ground free for the *Vacuna* to run her nose into." A stretch of two miles brought us to the house whose clinging ivies and genial aspect made



CANTLEY

its name seem a jest ; but “its chimbleys was down twice, an’ that’s a fact, an’ nothing natural to account for the tumblin’! The devil had his hand in it,” Davy gravely assured us ; and with the help of the wind, now blowing bravely, he took us swiftly away from so dangerous a neighbourhood.

We were forced to lay-to far below the inn. The course was already lined with onlookers, whose boats were wedged as close as they could lie. There was no chance for a skilful manœuvring for position ; we were late ; we must take what others had scorned and we found it very good indeed. Although we lay some distance down the stream, between an unambitious raft and a matronly house-boat, the whole course lay before us.

“There they are!” a voice suddenly shouted ; and at the cry every eye was focussed on the river.

The racers were rushing down stream with crackling sheets and full sails on. As they swept out of a narrow bit of the river towards a widening basin, they were bunched like a lot of foxhounds in full hue and cry. The wind was filling their great sails to the straining point, and, as they bore down upon us, their swift bows parted the waters with a hiss, as if in scorn.

They had soon swept past us, a snowy, tumultuous



CANTLEY REGATTA

cloud, their tremendous momentum making their flight as swift as it was faery-like in its airy lightness. We could hear the creaking of the cordage ; the wind straining at the sails ; the whistle of the breeze in the shrouds ; and the crackle and splutter of the river as its surface was cut by the knife-like keels and trim bows. Mingled with these sounds was the laboured breath, the gasp and pant from human lips, the swift, sharp word of command, the quick handling of ropes, the oaths, cries, cheers, that rose up from the men and the yacht-owners as the fortunes of their respective crafts were on the wane or in the ascendant.

The men's faces, looking out from between the sails, were as varying in expression as the cries and sounds. Some were pale, tense of muscle and drawn of lip ; others were scarlet, with the fire of the race blazing from cheek to lip ; others again were as impassive as if hewn in stone ; and a very few were laughing, as if indeed it were a sport and not a battle, this combat for the favour of the wind.

On and on the boats flew. The sails were as full of light, with the sun-rays upon them, as they were with the pressing breath of the lusty wind. Earth and sky were taking their part in this battle of white wings. The breeze was making a great stir up among

the clouds ; aerial masses were swirling about, and the zenith was crowded with breezy, gaseous shapes, that swept along with light feet, only to dissolve and re-form as they touched and melted. Along the shore, every leaf and twig seemed imbued with the universal stir and motion ; the trees at times rivalled the racers in their bending, swaying movements ; the wind tossed the crowns of the flowers as if they were things of paper : and one watched them resuming their shape with a kind of wonder. The garments covering the motley crowd assembled along the banks and massed on the boats' decks were as wantonly treated by the wind. Girls saw their veils making a spiral in the air above their hats, the spirals making ready to blow higher still, when quick hands would seize the gossamer folds just in time. Hats blew across the fields, and men and boys blew after them, laughing as they flew. The gay gowns swept rounded limbs, displaying trim ankles and neat boots, and hands were pressed close to the floating draperies, only the more helping to disclose the lines of the vigorous shapes. Everywhere one looked, there was flutter, movement, and a universal agitation. The voice of this motion was the long swelling cheer that broke only to begin anew, in chorused unison, as the racers made their victorious, headlong dashes.

The focus of the scene lay wherever the boats flew, with every eye bent on the flying sails, and every mouth open to groan or to shout in triumph. Spun across the scene, like a huge spider's web stretching down and up the river, there crossed and recrossed the complex filaments of the pendent rigging, gay with the V-shaped winning flags, with fluttering pennants, and waving bunting.

"Why have their painters never given us this?" cried Renard, with characteristic impetuosity. He had torn himself, for a moment, away from the group on the forward deck, to join us upon the stern. "Good heavens, but it's paintable! It makes one's fingers ache! See those sails rushing through the air like white flames! See them as they are swept by the tossing plumes of those knightly little willows; and the clouds above, with their splendid motion, and their light, bright tone! Then that shining sweep of the river, and the greens and yellows of the shoreline; and yonder, towards the windmills, all that mass of fluttering colour,—those flags, every one of them a distinct note: yet how they fuse and blend; those wherries, repeating the colours in their decks and hulls! Then the river, taking up the whole, spreading out the shape and form of it all, blurring the colours in the liquid reflections! Good God!

Why hasn't —— done it, or ——, or ——?" And Renard mentioned some of his famous English friends and contemporaries. "Why, Ziem, or those new men over there, in Paris, wouldn't be in it for a moment with this sort of thing! Luminous too," he went on, more softly, as if talking to himself—"luminous! What an aqueous quality, what translucence and half tones! Those level lines too, how good the shore-lines are,—just a rim, holding the river's brimming cup and giving the arch of the sky a bigger sweep! Look! Watch that wherry creeping up! How black she looks, with her sail in half shadow, and how all that bunting shows up against the brown of the sail!"

It was impossible to tell how long Renard's rhapsodic praises would have lasted. Davy, however, in his turn, had come forward with a sobering question: Was it our pleasure to lay-to for the night, or was he to sail on his course up to Norwich? "For there's no telling how long the wind 'll hold, strong as it is. It may drop with the sun."

This was a consideration to be treated with respect. An anxious council, forthwith, was held on deck. The brilliancy of this gay little water-fête, in our very teeth, as it were, held up to the lip as if for acceptance, made a decision involving its surrender

doubly difficult. But there was always the chance on these rivers of a breeze springing up on one reach, with a dead calm but a mile away. Many a glance did we give toward the west. Would the sky confide to us its secret? Many a wistful gaze did we turn to the brilliant water-scene, with the promise of an ever-increasing beauty. With what festival hues would the setting sun, two hours hence, be painting this fluttering mass of colour! After the solar transformation scene, the yachts themselves, we learned, were to present an illumination that would make the later lunar lighting pale and ineffective.

Back to the world, nevertheless, must we go. At Norwich we were due on the morrow. Sir Reginald, among other considerations, was awaiting us at a pearl of an inn; a feast in our honour was to be held that very night. Already the clanging chain of duty, with its golden links of pleasure, was beginning its relentless clinch; and little rivers and faery water-fêtes must be left behind. Reluctantly the order to be under way once more was given. All too soon we were amid-stream, with full sails, that bore us swiftly past the innumerable pleasure-boats and their happier passengers. Far down the reach we could see the racers turning as they tacked, to make their final



CANTLEY REGATTA

spurt for the goal of the stake-boat. The winner was still ahead, but her rival was close upon her heels, after her like a winged shark. As the boats neared the winning-post, along the shore there rang the ever-increasing roar from open throats. As we swept on, the cheers gave way to the long-protracted groan of suspense. Shouts swelling and ever swelling marked every turn in the fortunes of the favourite, until at last, as she swept in victory past her judges, the air was rent as with a single voice, in a cry of mad, triumphant glee.

Far along the river the shout followed us. It and the flags, fluttering over the meadows, grew fainter and ever fainter, and died out together as we tacked suddenly. The scene, its noise, its brilliancy, and its busy commotion, was blotted out : it was all as if it had never been. Once more quiet, pastoral banks closed in about us ; again the rural beauty of thatched farmhouses, of hills, soft-browed, with a great stillness written on their verdure, and a lapping river, was the familiar outlook.

“After all,” summarised Renard, as he sat on deck in the attitude of a Chinese idol, with his long legs crossed under him—“after all, we caught the race at its best moment. We saw it at the climax of its brilliancy. There wasn’t time for a single dull

moment—no tiresome waits, no boresome pauses, not a single inglorious mishap. It was a race—and a gallant one—born, so to speak, out of the clouds and trees. It sprang out of them like some wondrous, spectacular vision. It has vanished as miraculously. Take it all in all, the way to see Cantley regatta is the way we saw it.”

“Of course,” his friend seated opposite him said. He also had his arms and legs crossed, but the latter were laid horizontally along the deck. “Of course, Renard, we know that. We were entirely sure of our effects. Only, you see, I’m still boy enough to like to see it all, when it comes to a race. I like the beginning, middle, and end, with all the side-shows thrown in.”

“Oh, well, come next year, and get in your side-shows. If we hadn’t pushed on now, you’d have lost other side-shows, some we have arranged as a surprise. Violet, don’t you think they will like our surprise?”

“I hope so,” answered Violet, with a most extraordinary flush of colour suffusing her face; and then she turned her eyes away, towards some swans going up the river. A pair of male eyes, not Renard’s, were fixed on the face, the flush, and the averted glance. A decision of some kind followed

the moment's fixed stare, but all that was said was :

"It isn't another dawn surprise-party, is it?" and every one laughed except Lady Marten.

In such desultory talk and idle laughter the hours passed. The setting was as perfect as one could have wished for any idling. As we neared Norwich, the country grew in agricultural richness of beauty. Farmhouses thickened ; the windmills lessened as church towers took the eye upward ; lawns green and flower-rimmed, with trees of venerable antiquity, whose age was made much of, and the gold of waving grain-fields would focus in thicker, denser groups into a town called Brundal or Postwick. Past some fields we were bidden to stretch our eyes towards a region near which lay a genuine Broad, one of the few the Yare boasts. Beyond the meadows some fine trees made a dense clasp of shade. Out of the cool woods, further on, there grew some lawns, of an exceeding greenness ; a wide, finely built shed ; a porter's lodge with alluring latticed windows ; and opposite to these appointments of a gentleman's country seat, there stretched a wide, flat marsh, above which rose the thick roofs of a village guarded by a prosaic railway station. Whitlingham lay before us ; and at Whitlingham our cruise was to end.

Immediately there was a great bustling about. Grimes had lowered the jib; the anchor was cast, and our boat was made fast to a bit of a wharf before we were fairly alive to the fact that for the last time we were at our anchorage in a meadow. A rowing boat, of a cockney smartness, lay close to the wharf. Her boatman had boarded our boat, and was quickly handling bags and portmanteaux.

"Yes, that's all right," said Renard, in answer to our questioning the coolness of this proceeding. "This is a part of the surprise."

"Anything more? Is there a pirate or two about, to carry us off?"

There were no picturesque pirates to grace our capture, we were laughingly told; Davy was to take command of us, and there was evidence of a great liking for the mystery kindling his eye and arching his smile. He and Grimes had been busy crowding luggage into our own jolly-boat. What with the ease and quickness with which our landing had been effected, and the harmony that reigned among the organisers of those in charge of the surprise arranged on our behalf, there was no time left for sentiment. The tipping of Grimes was to have been a great feature in our own projected managerial scheme; the act was reduced to the swiftest sleight-

of-hand possible between one man holding coin and another waiting to take the shining metal. Our farewells to him and our boat were of a like empty hollowness. The hurry of the outer world had met us here, abroad upon a quiet river marsh.

That we were to row up to Norwich, so much was made known to us. The wisdom of the plan was made obvious at the very first of our starting forth. The river was as gay as a Parisian boulevard. "Tubs" upon this watery highway were as fashionable and quite as numerous as cabs rolling over stabler macadam. Sailing craft, of every variety of size and structure, swept between the verdant banks; and one must look well to one's steering in so crowded a thoroughfare.

Davy was a proud man as he handled the oars. Not a boat passed us but he gave it his salutation; and not a man, woman, or child on either the banks or within the boats but was given the honour of a brief but revealing biographical introduction. His pride in the virtues, wealth, and distinction of the Norwich inhabitants was second only to his exultant joy in the beauty of the river. Every meadow was given its owner's name, and the magnitude of the crops yielded by the fields about Norwich grew as his beer-kegs, thoughtfully taken along for re-

plenishment at the city's taverns, yielded their last drops.

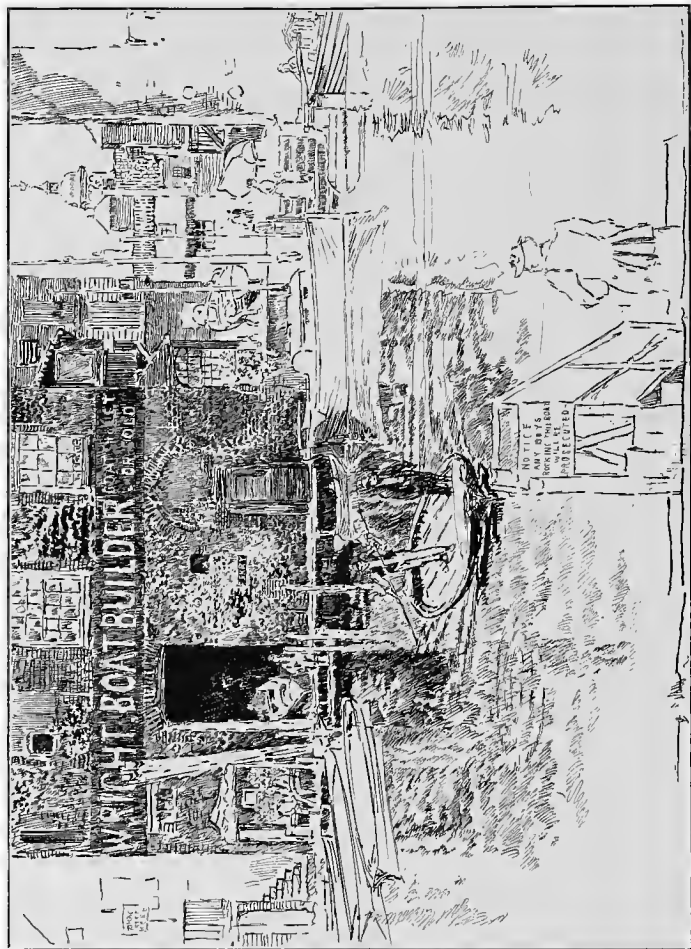
Beyond Thorpe, a crowded river-corner, the Cookham of Norwich, the stir and life began to lessen; the sails we met had a business air, and we alone, of the pleasure crafts, were making our way up to the city. We were gliding along between banks of velvet, from whose grassy carpet the tree-trunks sprang, with effortless grace, to wave their plume-like foliage. Although the sky was still pink, the dark was gathering in among the branches. In the distance were gray-green olive-tones. On either side there was still the generous breadth of the meadows. Within these riparian cinctures, lawns, rich and soft, and gardens thick with perfume, would break upon the following shapes of the trees. Wherever the eye lighted, man's caretaking, adorning touch was revealed; and while, beyond the perfectly kept enclosures, there was no slant of tiled roof or upward shooting of blackened chimney to mar the suburban loveliness, one had the prescience of those disturbing forces and disfiguring signs that characterise a city.

On and on we sped, the splash of the oars making the only break in the stillness. Already, in the outer distance, a light veil of hazy whiteness

was beginning to stretch its lace across the fields. Upon the land and the river there was the hush peculiar to the fading day. From the damp grasses came the humid breath of the dusk; and in the east a light was rising that shed abroad the sentiment and mystery of growing night.

A single star, the planet of the evening, had pierced the sky's tinted gauze. With an almost simultaneous quivering, there rose up from the river a deep and vibrant note. Gradually the note swelled into a song, and the song soon soared, freed from the tremor of the opening phrases, high, with swelling measure. As it rose heavenward, the "Song to the Evening Star" seemed, with its celestial clarity, calling unto the hidden planets to join their fellow. One by one, as the notes rose and fell, the starry specks appeared, to take their appointed place. The Pleiades trembled into twinkling being; Orion's starry belt proclaimed his presence; and the Great Bear shed forth his golden lustre as he emerged from the fields of space, pausing, as if to listen to a music that might have been an echo of heaven's own.

This episode of music and sentiment lasted only until the song was done. We could see Renard bending over Violet, as if urging her to play on; but her shaken head proclaimed her obduracy. We



NORWICH QUAYS

could see her settling herself back against the cushions, as she laid her violin across her knees. For entertainment we fell back upon the river. It was fuller now of more forbidding outlines. A tall chimney, whose cylindrical blackness emerged from obscurity, revealed by the light streaming from a steam-tug's lanterns, was the city's first outpost. Next, a cottage lamp cast its beams across the river. To these contrasting lights, above the tree-tops, free and clear, soon rode the moon, lighting her fields of air. This new day stirred the cows in their slumber; over the river's edge shapes rose up and large eyes blinked at us, heavy with the weight of sleep; and in the far distance, peopling unsuspected horizons, the moon's light lay, like a mantle of softness, on the backs of some feeding sheep eating grasses that were dusted with silver.

To the left the sinister-looking buildings were thickening. The dip of the sky was blocked by the rigid outlines of close-built factories and warehouses. A flash of light, abrupt and startling, illumined the half-nude figure of a stoker, whose body, bare to the waist, leaned forth to the river—a shape demoniac in its stained and coal-streaked disfigurements. Near one such shape, a pair of steps took their flight close from the river's edge, and, as if in affright, vanished

suddenly into the open star space. From this devil's work among men and buildings we were swept beneath the windows of a cosy Georgian house, wedged in, by some accident of fortune, between the prosaic factory faces ; and two young heads, in an old room, with yellow prints in old, dim frames adorning faded walls, an open volume, and a reading-lamp, made a fleeting vision of a Norwich home.

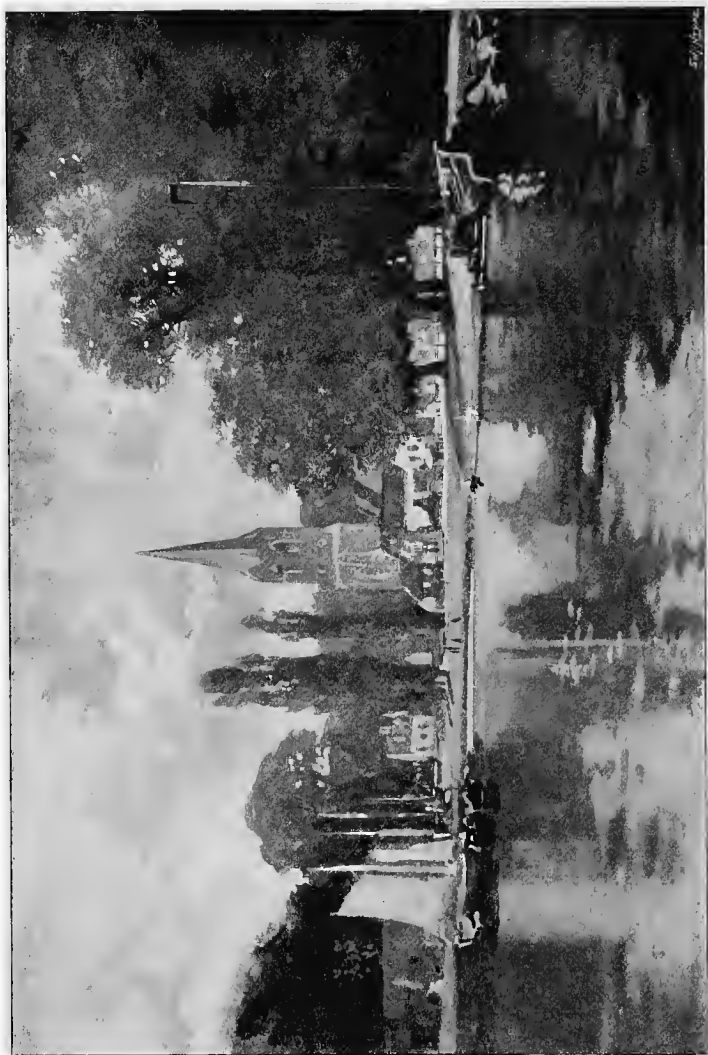
Beneath these motley signs of the growing city the river had shrunk to the width of a canal. It ran as black as it had been silver-white before. As if to mark, by a single ancient sign-post, that lost mediaeval power from which Norwich had risen in triumph, a crumbling bastion stood forth upon the water, a gallant remnant of the city's old walls. Now upon the air there comes the thud of moving pistons and the whiz of turning wheels, the only sounds modern Norwich, from its busy watch-towers of commerce, leans forth to hear. Beyond the bastion the river widened. Again the moon was shining in a wide, clear space ; white once more were the blanched faces of the houses ; frosted as with a coating of illumined ice were the tiny squares of lawns ; the flowers in a garden we passed were roses of wax ; and our oars, as they dipped into the river's shining whiteness,

dropped showers of glittering metal into the burnished surface.

Out of the idealising medium there grew something fairer than waxen roses and more perfect than trim lawns. Above and beyond the irregular roof-lines crowding the river, thickening into dim-lit domes, or tapering into spirals of aerial grace, there rose the spires and roofs of an illumined city. Norwich, in its ecclesiastical robes of a silver state, lay before us.

Although we were in the city, a part now of its arterial flow, there was a great stillness upon the river. Yachts, wherries, half-laden schooners, and steam-tugs lay moored to both banks, as devoid of moving life as if the moon had laid a spell upon their whitened shrouds. The only sound, save the rhythm of our oars, was the scraping of human feet upon the gravel of a lime-walk that followed the river's curve. Smothered laughter, and whispers pitched in an amorous key, the betraying acoustics of the water brought to our ears; figures and faces, soldiers in their scarlet, and maidens in their summer finery, came and went, as lovers will, in the chequered moonlight, unheeding of spying eyes.

Then the lime-walk came to an end. We shot beneath an iron bridge, past an embankment that



APPROACH TO NORWICH

flashed a thousand lights, and on which a vast number of people seemed gathered for the sole purpose, apparently, of looking down upon us. More yachts and house-boats lay moored, in a trance of stillness, along a strangely bushy shore to be the opposite neighbour to a city's thoroughfare along which rolled lighted broughams, and from which came the echoing tread of soldiers' measured steps.

Opposite this embankment Davy shipped his oars. The keel of our boat struck the gravel of a bit of ground running up from the river ; and then, as we looked about us, we knew we had come to the end of our voyage at Pull's Ferry, once the Bishop's Water-gate.

A Gothic arch stood close to the river, and through its defenceless opening, unchallenged, the pallid shadows of the river ran up as to mock its fallen strength. Beneath two poplars, huge cones of silver, sat a group of familiar figures ; but only one came forward to greet us. As Renard emerged from the shadow of the trees, we could see his face working, as if from some hidden inward emotion. But his agitation had been forestalled. At the first stepping upon the stones of the city, something rose in my throat. For me, at last, the golden moment was over. Our ten days' flight had brought

us back to the world ; and through the dark I could see certain shadowy shapes advancing to greet us—sober-clad Duty ; Care, with draperies crumpled and creased ; Life, hiding children of Fear in the folds of its flowing garments, of soaring-eyed Ambition, of embittered, misshapen Defeat, of cherubic-lipped Hope—those phantoms that lay in wait for us all, whether crowding about the cradle, or clustering thickly at the door of a cathedral close.

Renard meanwhile was saying, as he faced us—

“Beautiful, was it not? The moon made just the right lighting. Aren’t you glad that, once at least, you have come up to a city in fine, poetic fashion?”

“Beautiful, indeed, it was. But how can I be glad? Our cruise is at an end.”

“And mine, dear lady, is but begun ; for Violet, you see—Violet has consented to take me on the cruise of life.” And in his voice there was a ring of a noble emotion, as he held us, with a hand for each.

As if to seal the promise, a slender yet womanly shape emerged from the bastion’s shadow. It hovered a moment, as if irresolute, between the sheltering darkness and the betraying brightness of the moonlit space. Then, with a sudden sweep, the figure came towards us, with hands outstretched.

On Violet's face there was a radiance that made the moonlight lacking in lustre. To her lips, although they trembled, a mocking imp had been conjured to curve them, that the difficult moment might be met with a light grace.

"You see, dear people, it is all because I would come on the Broads. It would never have happened—would it?—had I gone to Norway"; and then on the instant, as if to repudiate the thought as she uttered it, Violet laid her hand on the arm of her lover.

It was under the glow of such stirring scenes that we made our way through the close to the Cathedral City. It was eminently fitting, however, since Love had been our fellow-passenger in this our runaway episode of cruising it on the Broads, that he should be leading us to a city full of churches.

THE END

